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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 524. FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 14TH, 1899. [ONE PENNY.

DON'T TAKE A SLEDGE-HAMMER

to crack a black beetle. Why? Because it is not necessary. You can crack a black beetle with the end of a small poker, and save your strength, and shew your wisdom. Don't give your lad a big thrashing for a small fault, or your maid a big scolding for a slight offence. You lose your dignity, and do no end of harm. Neither lads nor maids are perfect, and we've an idea that there is room for improvement in most of us. But do nothing in a towering passion. Leave that to mad dogs. Don't use unparliamentary language when we tell you of a good thing, say Page Woodcock's Wind Pills for the cure of Indigestion, Liver Complaints, Wind on the Stomach, Costiveness, Sick Headache, &c.

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SHORT STORIES

Edited by J. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 524.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending January 14th, 1899.

THE NEW NURSE.

"WELL," said Mrs. Abbott, leaning back in her big chair, "well, the directors have 'sat upon' Miss Clyde, and the general verdict is 'acceptable.'"

"Poor Miss Clyde!" said Dr. Lane, with lazy sarcasm.

"I am afraid," said Miss Morse, the head nurse, with a would-be coquettish glance at the indifferent doctor, "that you don't treat that august body with due respect. In fact, you are almost frivolous in your mention of it."

"They have discussed the matter," continued Mrs. Abbott, "and they have decided that she shall be capped. What do you think of it, Doctor?"

"What do *you* think of it? That is more to the purpose, it seems to me."

"I am all in favour of it," confessed the superintendent of nurses, with a good-natured laugh. "She is fast becoming a special favourite of mine. She is young, pretty, and an only child; it seems she was a society butterfly, but had aspirations. Of course, the parents were not aware of the extent of her dissatisfaction, and it came upon them like a blow when she decided to leave home and become a nurse. Certainly the vagaries of girls are very perplexing."

"They are, indeed," sighed Miss Morse.

"When she first came I was doubtful of her staying a week. I saw her look of astonishment when our stew came on the table, and it amused me. Then I saw that she forced herself to eat it, and I rather admired her pluck. My admiration has grown as I have seen the manner in which she has gone through her tasks. It has not been easy for her, but I really think she is beginning to enjoy it."

"She is evidently a very determined individual," said Dr. Lane carelessly. "So, now, as your soft heart is taken by her prettiness——"

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"Oh, no, Doctor! By her earnestness."

At this moment the Doctor was called away, so he evaded a reply.

When he returned he found another person in the room.

A tall, slender, very graceful girl, not more than twenty years old. Her blue print gown and sheer apron were dainty and fresh, and the kerchief crossed over the rounded bosom left the white throat bare. Her hair, which was abundant and of a very beautiful gold colour, was braided and wound round and round the little stately head; and her eyes, large, soft and grey, were fixed half-anxiously on Mrs. Abbott's ruddy countenance.

"Come here, my dear," that kindly woman was saying. And with her breath coming a little quicker, Miss Clyde obeyed, and advanced a little nearer:

"I am pleased to be able to tell you," continued the superintendent, "that the Board of Directors have decided to accept you. They met to-day, as you may be aware, and from your record they think you suitable for the post. Let me congratulate you, and also welcome you into the profession."

"Thank you," said the girl, with a grateful glance. "You have been very kind to me, Mrs. Abbott, and I—I appreciate it."

"So now," said Mrs. Abbott, with a smile, "you are a nurse, and may get your cap as soon as you like."

Miss Clyde was on the point of retiring, and had, in fact, almost reached the door, when Dr. Lane's voice arrested her.

"I wonder," he said in his lazy fashion, "how Miss Clyde would look in a cap? Miss Morse, will you not lend Miss Clyde your cap for a moment?"

With very evident reluctance Miss Morse removed her cap, and Mrs. Abbott placed it on Miss Clyde's head.

And there the new nurse stood, her hands tightly clasped together, her colour coming and going with every breath. But there was a passionate indignation in her heart. What right had he to make her stand here and be looked at in such a fashion! He was quite the most insulting man she had ever met!

"Very becoming," he said at last, in a careless, somewhat bored tone.

Without waiting for any more, she almost tore the cap from her head, and gave it back to its owner.

"I wonder, now," he went on meditatively, "why you did not become a nun?"

Mrs. Abbott laughed in her jolly way.

Miss Clyde turned to the door and went out without a word.

* * * * *

Katharine Clyde had not enjoyed an easy position since her arrival at the hospital one month ago. She was so different from the other nurses that they generally looked askance upon her, and while they had not been actually unkind, had not treated her in a friendly manner. Miss Morse, she felt, had for some unknown reason hated her from the first, and had shown it in every petty way possible. While Katharine's strict attendance to duty, and evident desire to learn, had left her head nurse very little room for complaint, yet every trifle had been represented in the worst light possible, until the girl wondered how Mrs. Abbott's opinion could have been so favourable.

And this was not the worst. "I could stand everything else if it were not for him!" she told herself to-night. And in fact the greatest antagonism seemed to have sprung up between herself and Dr. Lane from the moment of their first meeting. His calm assumption of superiority over everyone with whom he came in contact was what she could not endure. The fact that he was really a rich man, that he was the cleverest young doctor in the city, and that his only reason for studying surgery was his love for it, made him, perhaps the most influential person in the hospital. And so used was he to admiration and flattery, that he could not imagine anyone's refusing them to him. The girl had always disliked him, but to-night she felt that she fairly hated him.

"He will find," she said between her shut teeth, as she walked quickly away, "that there is one woman who has no intention of falling down and worshipping him. A nun indeed!"

* * * * *

Not the least of her trials had been the persistent determination of everyone here to ascribe her taking up nursing to a disappointment in love, and no one knew how her proud spirit chafed under it. Why could not they understand that a dreamy, romantic girl, with nothing on earth to do but enjoy herself, should be attracted by a life that promised self-sacrifice and a continual round of good works? To a woman of Katharine's temperament it was the most natural thing in the world.

Dr. Lane appeared the most determined of all to believe in her sentimental disappointment, and she considered that his question to-night added insult to injury.

Within the next week she had donned her uniform, and then began to feel for the first time like a nurse. And very sweet she looked in the severely plain gown and ample, snowy apron, the soft kerchief crossed demurely on her breast, the pretty cap crowning her gold braids.

Miss Clyde had been at the hospital nearly eight months before she was required to nurse for Dr. Lane. But one unfortunate evening in February, when she was chatting for just a moment with Miss Grayson, a dark-eyed, vivacious little maid, whose cap was never straight, Mrs. Abbott bustled in hurriedly.

"Miss Clyde," she said quickly, "prepare immediately to go on special duty with a typhoid fever case in the Mason's ward."

"Whose case is it?" said Katharine.

"Dr. Lane's. And, my dear," added the kindly lady, who had certainly opened her heart completely to this soft-eyed girl, "you must do your best, and win golden opinions from him. It is rather a desperate case, and his asking so particularly for you, such a young and almost inexperienced nurse, shows how highly he thinks of you. For he is very difficult to please."

The end of this speech brought them to the door of the Mason's ward, and Katharine, with a sinking heart, followed Mrs. Abbott into it. To have to nurse for this man! To have to converse with him, to take orders from him, to be liable to visits from him at all hours of the day! She hated the thought.

He left the room shortly after she entered it, and she could see him through the half-opened door, going slowly down the corridor, giving his orders very earnestly to Mrs. Abbott. Miss Clyde lost the count of her patient's pulse as she dreamily thought what broad shoulders he had; then she flushed indignantly, told herself she disliked fair men, and that he was overbearing and intensely disagreeable.

When she came over to the ward—or room, for it was a room off the ward—the next morning, Miss Murray, who was on special night duty with her patient, gave her a discouraging report. Katharine was engaged in

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giving her patient one of his frequent sponge baths when the doctor came in. He looked grave and tired, and scarcely noticed her. When his visit to the patient was over, and she followed him out to the corridor, he gave his orders in an abrupt manner, and then walked quickly away, at which Miss Clyde was extremely well-pleased.

The patient was trying; he was very ill and delirious most of the time. The nurse grew thin and nervous over him, but her energy and her wonderful patience never flagged. She was indefatigable, and could not be persuaded to leave him to take proper meals and exercise. Dr. Lane noticed her pale cheeks and the hollows round her large eyes, and on several occasions ordered her out in a by-the-way tone that she resented and did not obey.

To-day, however, she had nearly fainted during his afternoon visit, and was still sitting on the sofa at the foot of her unconscious patient's bed, striving giddily to recover her strength, and feeling weakly indignant because he was standing there, gazing at her from under his lowered brows; when he abruptly turned and left the room.

Outside he encountered Miss Grayson.

"Please go to Miss Clyde's room and bring me her cloak and hat," he said quickly, and then passed on down the corridor, not noticing, perhaps not caring, that the little nurse made her black eyes very big and round with astonishment and curiosity, and stared after him.

* * * * *

When he returned to Miss Clyde, he was dressed for a walk and had her cloak and hat.

"I am going," he said "to take you out for an airing, Miss Arnold will take your place for an hour."

He stood there, holding her cloak for her.

"I—" began Katharine.

"You must go or break down, and I have no desire to have another patient on my hands."

"Not on your hands," said Miss Clyde haughtily. "Dr. Yates is the house physician."

"Nevertheless, I should certainly consider you my patient. Will you kindly put on this cloak, Miss Clyde, and relieve me of it?"

Katharine looked up into his stern face, and then she obeyed! She stood quite silent and passive, and allowed him to put on her cloak, and even to button it under her dimpled chin, although his hands were strangely awkward and unsteady for a young doctor with such iron nerves as he was known to have.

Then they went out, passing several nurses, who looked at them in astonishment, as their mutual antagonism was well known to all. He assisted her into the carriage, and she made herself as small as possible in her corner, and did not volunteer a word as the swift horse whirled them off.

He made one or two careless observations, to which she replied in monosyllables, and would not unbend from her dignity an inch. The rapid, gliding motion through the keen, bright air would have been highly enjoyable to her under any other circumstances, but under these the only emotion of which she was cognizant was of an intense longing to be back.

But the drive really did her good, and she went about her duties on her return with a renewal of her old energy.

* * * * *

It was later in the evening, and everyone was down at tea, when the Doctor sent Miss Clyde to the pharmacy for something he was in immediate need of. It seemed to him, sitting there in that dim room with his fingers on the patient's rapid pulse, that she was very long about it. At last, so impatient did he become, he softly opened the door, and stepped out into the corridor.

It was deserted. He met not a soul on his quick, noiseless walk to the pharmacy. The lights were all somewhat dim, and everything seemed unnaturally quiet. He paused on the threshold at the sight of Katharine.

She was leaning over the counter mixing something, with quick fingers, in a glass. He could see her in profile—the graceful bend of her golden head, the round white throat where the kerchief had a little slipped aside in her haste, the upward curve of her dark lashes against the softly flushed cheek, the dainty, curled red lips a little parted.

In an instant, before he quite knew what he was doing, he had started forward and caught her to his breast, and was pressing his lips in a long, burning kiss to hers.

Katharine wrenched herself free, and stood looking at him for a moment, white and panting, and then swept past him, with head held haughtily erect.

The Doctor stared after her until she quite disappeared, and then leant back against the counter and put his hands in his pockets. His blood was still racing with unusual violence through his veins and his pulses thrilling from that recent contact, yet he had realised for the first time, as he caught that strange pale look on her face, of fear and aversion, the enormity of the thing he had done. He was appalled, literally frightened—*he!*—at the realisation; yet, not for all he was worth would he have missed it.

In this contradictory state he was still standing when he heard the nurses come trooping up from tea. The pharmacy was a common meeting place for them all, and as he felt too agitated to face them at present, he walked slowly down towards his patient's room. He had passed by the door two or three times and was trying to gather up the courage to enter, when Katharine opened the door and looked out. Alarm was plainly imprinted upon her lovely face. Without a word he followed her back through a few feet of the ward into the room.

A great change for the worse had taken place in the patient, and in working over him these two appeared to forget their relative positions. The Doctor, however, followed wistfully with his eyes the golden gleam of Miss Clyde's hair as she moved about the dim room, and Katharine, for her part, carefully avoided getting anywhere near the Doctor.

Miss Morse, who now joined them, noticed that there was something between them, and was puzzled.

The patient died just as it was time for the night nurse to come on duty. Miss Clyde looked so white and so weak, that the Doctor whispered to Mrs. Abbott, and she drew the girl away as she was about to attend to the body.

"Miss Murray will do that," she said kindly. "You must come away, my dear, and rest. You look ill."

"I—I don't feel very well," gasped Katharine.

She staggered a little, and everything grew black before her. She was just dimly conscious of seeing Dr. Lane spring towards her, and of fighting feebly against him—and then lost everything.

"She has fainted," said the Doctor, in a subdued voice. "Get the nearest room ready, and I will bring her in."

Very tenderly and reluctantly he laid his unconscious burden down upon the bed they had prepared for her,

and left her to the care of the nurses. He was wandering about aimlessly and unhappily, not being able to settle to anything, when Miss Grayson came running up to him.

"Doctor," said she breathlessly, "will you please come in and look at Miss Clyde? I can't find Dr. Yates, and she is delirious."

Without waiting for her to finish, Dr. Lane hastened off in the direction of Miss Clyde's room. As he opened the door a wild, unmeaning babble in her sweet treble fell upon his ear, and she was sitting up in bed, her lips and cheeks crimson, her eyes glittering with fever, her golden hair all unbound and falling over her white gown. She was laughing and talking very fast, and Mrs. Abbott and Miss Morse stood one on either side of the narrow bed, trying to sooth her.

Katharine had got the fever. For days she was delirious, and then lay in a stupor that was even worse. Dr. Lane scarcely left her, neglecting all other duties to sit in that darkened room, with bowed head, listening to her wild ravings.

He was much too wretched to attempt to hide his feelings. He cared very little whether they were known or not, and every one knew that if Miss Clyde died the dearest thing in life to Dr. Lane would be gone.

She did not die, however. Slowly, almost with reluctance, as it would seem, she struggled back to life.

The first warm days of April were come, and Miss Clyde's first airing was being talked of. It seemed to be all "Miss Clyde" now; everyone in the hospital was talking and thinking of Miss Clyde.

After dinner one day when the scent of the spring flowers came softly in, Miss Morse was closeted with Mrs. Abbott in the superintendent's office.

"And you are sure you are not mistaken?" Mrs. Abbott was saying, in a perplexed tone.

"I saw it with my own eyes," declared the other.

"And Miss Clyde was angry, you say?"

"She seemed startled at first, of course, but she has evidently got over it," said Miss Morse, with a sneer. "And you must acknowledge it is light conduct, unbecoming a nurse."

The older woman looked at her steadily for a moment, then directed her gaze out of the window.

"Has it ever occurred to you that Dr. Lane is very much in love with Miss Clyde?"

"Probably," said Miss Morse sullenly. "But you know he has no intention of marrying. Hasn't he often said so?"

"However, if I mistake not, this is the Doctor's brougham stopping here now. We can easily refer this matter to him."

When the Doctor came in Mrs. Abbott met him gravely. He looked flushed and confused at her story, and Miss Morse smiled triumphantly. When the superintendent had finished, however, he looked up with sudden resolve.

"Mrs. Abbott," he said earnestly, "I acted unpardonably on the occasion you refer to, and my only excuse is that the love I have for Miss Clyde overcame my reason for the time being. My highest ambition is to make that young lady my wife. If you have any regard for her (and I think you have), you will not allow this story to become common property. However, enough of this. I have come to-day to take her for a drive, and I know you will see that she is comfortably dressed for it."

Katharine was delighted at the prospect of a drive. She was still very weak, and the Doctor carried her in his own strong arms down the stairs.

Dr. Lane placed himself beside her, and the horses dashed off. They were both very silent. He was sunken in thought, half-painful, it would seem by his expression, half-sweet.

Katharine at first contented herself with looking out of the window at all the sights she had been shut in from so long. Presently, however, something appeared to vaguely trouble her. She was trying to remember something. She turned her head and looked at her companion. Surely she had seen him before—where? Where? A pained, puzzled look came over her face, and then—then—it all rushed back upon her, and the dim, tormenting fancies of sickness cleared away.

At that moment Dr. Lane turned towards her—to catch again that look of fear and aversion he had seen in her eyes on that fatal night. He shrunk back an instant as from a blow. Then:

"Katharine, darling," he said humbly, "don't look at me so! I cannot bear it from you! Can't you forgive me, and pity the most wretched fool in Christendom? Sweetheart, if you knew how I love you, and how miserable I have been, you could not find it in your tender heart not to forgive me!"

She had turned her head away, and was looking from him, out of the window. One little ungloved hand lay on the seat between them. Lane put his own very tenderly over it.

"Won't you speak to me, Katharine? Won't you forgive me? My little love, look at me, and tell me I have not sinned past all hope of pardon."

Slowly Katharine turned her head, until her great soft eyes, filled with tears—and something else—looked into his. And then, somehow, it happened that the little weak head was laid down on his breast, and she was weeping for very happiness.

"And you really love me?" said Lane at last.

She looked up at him with some tender reproach in the grey eyes.

"Do you think," she said, "that I should be *here* if I did not now that memory has returned? Will this convince you?" and, drawing down his head, she put her soft, quivering lips to his.

"I believe you, Kate!" he whispered, drawing her closer to him.

T. G. BOWEN.

DEPARTURE OF THE FIRST TRAIN IN ENGLAND.

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THE TIMMINS TROUBLES.

V.—A FRIENDLY GAME OF DRAUGHTS.

"Now, my dear," said Mr. Timmins, as he drew on his slippers and settled himself for the evening, "if you will get the draught-board I'll play you a game. You're learning so rapidly that it's really a pleasure to play with you."

Mrs. Timmins giggled with delight, kissed her husband on the top of the head, and fluttered away to find the board and men.

"Which shall I take, the white or the red men?" she asked, as she plumped down on a stool about a foot and a half lower than his easy chair, and arranged the apparatus at an angle of fifty degrees.

"I think you misapprehend my suggestion," retorted Mr. Timmins. "I didn't propose to go tobogganing down hill. My idea was a game of draughts, and if you think those men are going to stand on a board tipped up on one end, and wait to be moved, you're not thoroughly acquainted with their habits. There, can't you hold it like that?" and Mr. Timmins jerked his wife's side of the board up to her chin, and began arranging the white men on his rows.

"I'd better put a book under it," said Mrs. Timmins. "Or if you would lower your knees a little it would come even."

"Very likely," replied Mr. Timmins; "but my knees weren't constructed with special regard to draughts. They were put where they are and fastened, and they won't run up and down like a flag. If you can't hold up your side of the board we won't play."

"Oh, yes, certainly," said Mrs. Timmins. "Let's see, is it your move or mine?" And she pushed a man straight forward.

"What are you trying to play?" demanded Mr. Timmins. "Do you think this is a game of football? Don't you know you've got to move sideways? It isn't your move either. Put that back. There. Now I'll move there."

"Oh, I know you're going to take me, you always do," squealed Mrs. Timmins, picking up the draught she had moved before and putting it in her mouth while she studied the prospect. "If I put it here you'll——"

"Swallow it, why don't you? If you don't want it taken, why don't you swallow it?" interrogated Mr. Timmins. "Can't you leave the thing alone till you're ready to move? Put it down, I tell you."

Mrs. Timmins restored it to its square and kept her thumb on it so as not to lose her move.

"If I put it there, can you take it?" she asked, wriggling it round and finally drawing her hand away in jerks, as if afraid to leave it.

"Just watch and see," grinned Mr. Timmins, as he popped a man over it and gathered it in.

"Now I'll move here," said Mrs. Timmins. "I don't know, though. Perhaps I'd better move here." And she chased a man over a half a dozen squares.

"Are you going to move 'em all?" demanded Mr. Timmins. "Do you think that a man's triplets, and goes in six places at once? Move it there. Now, let me see. Let me see." And Mr. Timmins began to whistle.

Mrs. Timmins glanced up at the curtains to see if they were hung right, and then she turned to the board again, and shoved a man into another square.

"What are you doing?" howled Mr. Timmins. "'Tisn't your move! I haven't moved yet. Put him back and wait till I move."

Mrs. Timmins put it back with a sigh, and raised the board a little to get a rest for her elbow on her knee.

"Hold it still, can't you?" scowled Mr. Timmins. "Now I'll move here," he continued, not noticing that he left his king row open.

"Then do I take these two men and get a king?" inquired Mrs. Timmins. "Of course I do. Crown me. I've got the first king." And Mrs. Timmins chuckled hysterically.

"No, you haven't either. I didn't mean that move. If you can't play draughts without cackling like a hen you'd better give it up. I'll take that back and move here; now, so. Now you can move."

"Over here?" asked Mrs. Timmins.

"Certainly. That's very good." And her husband gobbled two men.

"I didn't see that; I'd rather put it here," she remonstrated.

"Too late now," said Mr. Timmins, pegging away for the king row. "You should study your moves first."

"If I go here I get another king," said Mrs. Timmins, plunging through an unguarded space.

"What d'you want to tumble 'em all over for?" shrieked Mr. Timmins. "Haven't you got any sense? You make more fuss over a king than most women over a baby. Don't you know it's my move? Give me back those men. What are you putting them there for? Here, this one goes there."

"No, it doesn't," reasoned Mrs. Timmins. "I know——"

"Oh, of course you know. You've got it all. All you want is a pair of hinges and speckled sides to be a draught board. If I ever want to beat some good player I'll put a wash-tub on your head and move you for a king. Where are my men?"

"I think they slid off," said Mrs. Timmins, screwing herself round to look under her chair, and thereby losing the rest of the draughts.

"Are you satisfied?" raved Mr. Timmins, kicking the board under the table. "Can't even play a game of draughts without making a fuss about it, can ye? I beat you, anyway." And Mr. Timmins plunged upstairs.

"Never mind," said Mrs. Timmins to herself. "I got a king."

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SUPPRESSED EVIDENCE.

It might truly have been styled a military dinner, for, with the exception of the host and hostess and three young society belles, the entire party was made up of army officers and their wives. The one other exception was only apparent, for Mr. Wright belonged to the body of war, although his duties were those of the department in London and not of the field.

Mr. and Mrs. Powell had, during the past five summers, spent their holidays in garrison towns where they k new many of the officers, and their dinner was the outward sign of sincere appreciation of similar hospitalities extended to them by their guests of the evening. It had proved an unqualified success, and now, as the coffee was served, the stories of army life, so gratifying to Mrs. Powell's love of things military, were going the rounds.

Colonel Hopgood had told of stirring times in which he had participated; Major Hinton, with his usual gallantry, had declared what a blessing women were to a soldier's life; while of the younger division, Lieutenant Savage, true to his branch of the service, let out the secret of how the infantry officers had, the year previous, outwitted their brethren of the cavalry at the Christmas ball.

Mr. Wright, when called upon, stated that, owing to his position in the Department, his knowledge of the army was purely documentary, and was made up entirely from the reports of the several commanding officers. Of its social life he knew little or nothing, and as official business was rather dry talking, he asked that the duty of story-telling might be transferred to one better posted in garrison life—Colonel Keller, he meant.

The Colonel was one of those old-school officers who never flinched when duty called, whether it was on the field of battle or in the social arena, and this summons found him alert to respond,

"Mr. Wright," he began, "is correct when he says that one who obtains his knowledge of army life from official reports knows very little of its inward workings and social life. In fact, some of these reports, although strictly in accordance with regulations, if read between the lines would convey a great deal more than one would infer from the stiff official wording. It is upon a report that I made over ten years ago that I now base my story.

"As a usual thing, there is nothing of so little use to the regiment on foreign service as a sub fresh from a Military Academy. He arrives on the full tide of his glory, and is hard to break in; although I will say that, with a few exceptions, these same raw recruits, after a couple of years' training, turn out to be good officers and a credit to the service.

"Lieutenant Dorsey—for reasons that will appear later, I have withheld his real name—was an exception to the usual run of these youngsters, inasmuch as he was both a popular and good officer from the day he joined us. He was also a thorough gentleman, and it was not a month before he was the favourite of the station; petted by the ladies, and admired and looked up to by the men. Strange to say, his head was not turned, and I soon began to look upon him as the most promising officer in my command.

"Major Hinton has spoken of the good influence of women on the lives of soldiers, and I agree with him. There are, however, exceptions to every rule, and such was the case in my story, for it was a woman who spoilt a career which at the start promised so much.

"It was the third summer after Lieutenant Dorsey had joined us that a young woman, whose name I shall not mention, came to visit the wife of one of the captains. I recall having read somewhere, 'Wherever youth and maiden are, there is a certainty of romance, and a chance of tragedy.' There was surely romance in this case, for at the end of the summer, when she returned to her home, she took the heart of my favourite lieutenant with her. It was to my wife that he shortly afterwards confided the secret of the engagement.

"During all that winter there was not a happier or more jovial officer than he, and when in the spring his application for leave was granted, he left for Bombay, followed by the good wishes of every officer and man in the regiment.

"Just three weeks from the time of his departure, and before his furlough was up, he again stood before me and reported for duty—a changed man. From the moment I looked into his eyes I knew something of serious import had occurred; but the chance to invite his confidence seemed never to present itself, so it was not until a couple of months afterwards that I learnt the true facts.

"The details came from my wife, who had written for particulars to a former school friend in Bombay. It was the old story. A young girl of more or less romantic turn of mind had become enamoured with army life during a visit, and had fallen in love, to a greater or less extent, with a good-looking young officer, the affair ending in an engagement. But a winter at home and a more tempting offer, from a financial point of view, had brought a change of mind, and to be the wife of an army officer with rather poor pay was no longer to her liking.

"Woman-like she was pleased with his devotion, and instead of breaking the engagement, she allowed him to continue writing such letters as might be expected from a man so thoroughly in love. One thing, however, he omitted to write. He did not tell her of his leave of absence, as he wished to surprise her. And he did.

"What occurred at the meeting none of us ever knew, but the man who returned to us 'for duty' was but a poor substitute for the light-hearted fellow who had so recently left us. The ladies attempted, by every womanly expedient, to cheer him and to bring him out of himself; the men tried, sometimes clumsily, but always sincerely, to show their sympathy and regard.

"It was useless—the arrow had gone home, and the wound would not heal.

"Then we were moved to an advance post on the frontier, and I hoped that would mend matters. But it didn't. Young Dorsey wanted above all else, apparently, to be left alone; and when not on duty he would shut himself in his room and remain invisible to every one.

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Nor was this the most serious change. The entire character of the man seemed transformed. The once reliable officer became careless and untrustworthy.

"When the outbreak on the border, early in spring, required immediate attention, it so happened that his troop was the only one that could be dispatched without delay. His captain was on leave and he, being the senior lieutenant, would naturally have been placed in command, but I felt that I could no longer trust him; I confess it was one of the hardest duties of my career as a soldier to order him on special duty, and send away the troop in the command of another officer. Poor fellow! The lesson was needed, but it cut deeply.

"For some time I feared that he would simply let himself sink into the depths of despondency. It must have been especially galling to his spirit when, after some hard work, the troop came home covered with glory, a share of which might have been his.

"Perhaps just that bitter medicine was needed as a tonic to his pride. At any rate, during the weeks of quiet that followed, I noticed in him a decided change for the better, more determination and resolve. The improvement was so marked that I decided to give him another trial. So one day when it became necessary to send a small detachment to quiet some unruly natives, I put him in command, and he departed with twenty-five men.

"It was the third afternoon after their departure that the officer of the day rushed into my room and reported that a messenger had just arrived with the news that a fight had taken place, and that Lieutenant Dorsey had been killed, but none of the men had been injured.

"It had been a long time since an officer had been brought home dead, and as the body was carried down the line of officers' quarters, every head was uncovered.

"With the death of the lieutenant the command had devolved upon his sergeant-major, a man well advanced in years, who worshipped the very ground upon which his lieutenant walked. It seemed only natural then, when describing the death of his favourite officer, before the members of my staff, that at times his voice should fail him, and tears dim his eyes.

"'It was just the day after we left,' he said, standing at attention, 'that we came upon their deserted camp. From signs we knew that they were not far off, and by noon we had located them. They had taken a position among a lot of rocks, and evidently intended to fight. The lieutenant called to me and said: "The only way to get those rascals out is to charge them. I shall lead. Follow me. Continue the pursuit until every one is taken or killed." We wheeled into line, but before we were fairly ready, he gave the word, and putting the spurs into his horse, bounded away far in the lead. We went after him as fast as possible, but he distanced us, and was far in advance when they opened fire. They fired only about six shots in all, and I saw him discharge his revolver twice in return, and then fall from the saddle. When we reached him he was dead, shot through the heart.

"'I left two men to look after him, while we continued the pursuit, as ordered. We captured four, wounding one, the rest escaped. As there was nothing more to do we returned.'

"That was a gloomy afternoon, and as I sat alone in my room looking over the official report written by my clerk and handed to me for correction and signature, I must acknowledge that I dwelt upon the death of my officer with feeling of the deepest sorrow. I forgot his failings of the past year, and thought only of the bright young fellow whose life had promised so much. It is no wonder that I wrote after the closing lines of the report: 'An officer who was an honour to the service, and died a soldier's death in the performance of his duty.'

"Just as I was about to sign the document my orderly entered and announced that Sergeant-Major Hooper desired to see me. Hooper was the man who had made the report of the lieutenant's death, and thinking he might have some favour to ask, I ordered that he be shown in. He appeared, carrying under his arm a bundle wrapped in an old newspaper.

"'I know that I should report to the officer of the day,' he said, 'but what I have to say is something about the lieutenant's death, and I think I should tell it to you a one.'

"'Something you omitted from your report?' I asked, and my voice must have sounded rather stern. For to withhold facts in such a case was a grave offence.

"'Yes, sir. But what I did not relate before your staff I intended to tell you,' and the same tremour was noticeable in his voice as when he reported the death. 'The facts of the fight are just as I related them. But after the fight I examined the lieutenant. He was dead, but I saw something that made me take off his tunic and put on another.'

"He undid the string of the bundle he carried under his arm.

"'It is the only evidence I withheld from my report.'

"He unfolded the coat, and held it up without a word. As I took it from him, turning it this way and that, to get the light upon it, something fell from the inner left-hand pocket to the floor. Very reverently the sergeant stooped and gathered up—what? Simply a delicate gold rim, a few scraps of blood-stained velvet, and what seemed the fragments of a miniature portrait of a woman painted upon porcelain. Yet though shattered beyond recognition, I think that as we viewed it silently, neither of us doubted whose picture, worn to the last over the young officer's heart, had been destroyed by the bullet that took his life.

"Replacing the remains of the portrait, I held up the coat so that I could see the hole through which the bullet had gone. The blood had long since dried, leaving its stain, but that was not all—the cloth was badly burnt.

"The garment slipped from my nerveless grasp, as a hundred thoughts flashed through my mind, and seizing Hooper by the shoulders, I cried:

"'Your report! You said no one was near him!'

"'I told the truth, sir,' he replied, and his head was bowed for the first time.

"'Heavens!' I breathed, 'you don't mean——'

"There were tears in his eyes as he slowly replied: 'Yes, sir; the lieutenant shot himself.'

"It must have been some hours later when an orderly appeared and asked if the report was ready to be forwarded, as the messenger had been awaiting it for some time. Where had my thoughts been during those hours? In the past, recalling some little act or saying of a brave young soldier who had made his last march.

"I picked up the report and re-read the lines I had added. Should I change them, giving the true facts and thereby cloud his memory? Or should I send it as it stood?

"Ladies and gentlemen, what would you have done in my place?"

H. FAIRFAX.

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A Special Report.

Fox Kneller was a district reporter on the *Southern Star*, a half starved, undermanned little provincial daily that was effusively grateful for a three-and-sixpenny advertisement, and threw in half a column of "notice" for a week's four-inch "run."

The *Southern Star* paid no dividends, being worked at a loss by a handful of local politicians, whose remarks were always given verbatim, with grammatical corrections by the editor, when necessary.

It never by any chance took an independent view of anything, excepting perhaps the weather; lightning and snowstorms not being advertised functions.

Its great rival contemporary was the *Daily Dawn*, and a reportorial error or even a misprint in that journal caused the *Star* to twinkle furiously.

Then would the *Southern Star's* editor—a weary old hulk with a fine education and a riotous nose—take a new nib and wax sarcastic to the full extent of his two-pound-ten a week. Then would the little boys who wrote the "locals" drop in funny lines on their own account, in prose or in verse according to the number of months which had elapsed since they had left school, and the state of their love affairs.

But the *Star* people looked chiefly to Fox Kneller to uphold their honour and confuse the enemy when possible, and Fox was as keen on the job as anyone.

He had been on the *Daily Dawn* himself once upon a time, and had left it "through misadventure," as he termed it. To put it briefly, Fox had misjudged the relative importance of Scotch whisky and a weighty political speech. On the night of his downfall the whisky was first and the speech nowhere—that is to say, it was nowhere in the *Daily Dawn* next morning.

Since that time Fox had taken nothing but coffee in winter and "small lemons" in summer. But he had conceived a venomous dislike for the *Dawn* people, and anathematised them illogically under his breath every time he saw one of their contents bills.

Curious to say "Fox" was not a nickname. He had been so baptised somewhere in West Cornwall, and possibly the name had suggested the profession of journalist, his forbears having caught pilchards from time immemorial. One of them, however, had, a few hundred years before married the daughter of a stranded French spy, which fact may account for some things.

Anyhow, the name, if scarcely a "Christian" one, fitted him exceedingly well, for his senses were marvellously acute, and that extra one peculiar to pressmen and engine-drivers, which is made up of all the others, together with a mechanical memory and some kind of doggish instinct, was developed in him to an almost incredible extent.

He was of middle height, square-jawed, in Cornish style, talked well, moved in jerks, was unmarried, and never caught colds.

The *Dawn* editor, an Oxford University man who had been, amongst other things, a war-correspondent and a Cook's tourist guide, had just been appointed when he discharged Fox Kneller, and the remainder of the staff had ever since taken turns, directly or indirectly, according to their position, in making that Oxford man understand what a blunder he had committed.

Fox had the same duties to perform for the *Southern Star* as he had previously fulfilled for the *Daily Dawn*, that is to say, he covered a district somewhere about sixteen miles by three, which district included a fashionable watering-place—Fox's home and headquarters—and two country towns of some importance, and lay at its nearest point about ten miles from the assize-town from which both the *Daily Dawn* and the *Southern Star* were published.

It was at the station of one of the two smaller towns—Marsh Royal—that Fox Kneller alighted at nine o'clock on this particular October night, to the not over cheerful accompaniment of thick driving rain from the south-east. Fox's advent there may be explained by the following three facts:—

(1) He had for some time past heard mysterious hints of a prize-fight without gloves being arranged between certain champions who were to meet somewhere in that neighbourhood.

(2) At a vestry meeting held that afternoon, he had overheard a churchwarden, known to be addicted to surreptitiously reading pink sporting papers in church, say that he had an important engagement that evening, and had moreover seen him wink, as he said so, to another member, who was an ex-army drill sergeant.

(3) He had, some hours later, seen these two men get into a much over-loaded cab, which cab he had watched driven away by a road that led to only two places, *viz.*, the deep sea, which was absurd, and Marsh Royal, in which locality Fox Kneller now found himself.

The station stood just outside the town itself, and Fox shivered and grunted as he started to walk along the straight, level road, which presently became a street with low melancholy rows of houses on either side, all of one monotonous pattern, and all having the same tragic uninhabited appearance.

The lamps flickered in blue despair, and the pavements near them glistened through the darkness and fog.

Warm visions of a well-lit billiard-room with accompanying cries of "Ah, too hard!" and "Thirty-nine all,"

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flashed across Fox Kneller's mind as he drew his shining waterproof cape more closely around him with a malediction on all forms of "sport"—except billiards.

Directly he came upon a building with a series of glowing upper windows, from which issued sounds of revelry and song. He halted opposite it for a few moments.

"Club Social," he muttered, "Jimmy Kent's there and be hanged to him!" and he grinned as there rose before his mental eye a slightly foppish figure with a *pince-nez*, superciliously listening to the local musical talent of Marsh Royal.

"Jimmy Kent" did the same district for the *Dawn*, and had in fact stepped into Fox's shoes.

"So near and yet so far, Jimmy," he muttered as he hurried on again. "You'll hav something for breakfast besides toast in the morning—that is if I have any luck."

Fox was quite in the dark as to the exact *locale* of the fight, but he had a tolerably clear notion of where to look.

A few minutes after he had passed the Club, he came upon a triangular piece of shrubbery inclosed by iron railings.

Suddenly turning from the direct road, Fox Kneller passed rapidly to the most unfrequented side of the triangle and there halted.

Rapidly slipping off his waterproof coat he rolled it up tightly and thrust it, with his hat, through the railings into the midst of some shrubs. A little emptying of pockets, and behold the rain from the south-east beat on another Fox Kneller—one with a thick pea-jacket, a fur cap, a coarse red scarf and a square-cut goatee-beard—with a dingy clay-pipe to keep it all fitting company.

The next half-hour saw this transformed individual visiting sundry insignificant red-curtained public-houses, ostensibly in search of a mysterious (and mythical) "Mr. Martin," which individual had, it appeared, promised to meet him that evening at each of these very same public houses in order to "show him some sport."

Two—three—four he tried without success, but upon entering the fifth bar his quick senses immediately became aware of an air of bustle and subdued excitement which seemed very encouraging.

The place was crowded, not with loafing farm hands and unclean clay-cutters as had been the others, but with men of quite a different stamp.

Surely such a collection of small eyes and straight, thin lips were not there for nothing!

"Evening," said Fox, addressing an extremely busy young person with a shock head of orange hair behind the bar, "'ave there been a Mr. Martin here inquiring for me?" hoping fervently two things—that there did not happen to be a Mr. Martin present, and that he had repeated his formula for the last time that evening.

"Scotch yours, sir?—coming, sir—Martin—Martin—don't know no sich name—yes, very good cider, sir,"—thus the young person.

"He told me to meet 'im here," said Fox, growing more certain as he glanced round and affected a dubious air. Then making a bold stroke he sidled up to the bar, and leaning over close to the girl, whispered:

"Where's it coming off, my dear?"

"Straight through the passage," came the prompt reply.

Fox heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"Ah," said he, "give us a Burton."

Retreating with his beverage, he coolly threw it out into the road, and replacing the empty glass, dived into the narrow passage to be confronted by a burly man, who extended a huge, beefy hand.

"Arf a minute! Where's yer t'oket?" said this obstacle in husky tones.

"That's all right, mate, I came with Mr. Parkin's," replied Fox, naming the vestryman; "only I had to go somewhere else first—didn't he tell you?—he got my ticket fur me."

Verbal fiction was a strong point with Fox. Possibly the fact of his having to stick so closely to veracity in his ordinary work made some outlet for romance necessary.

"Ugh! All right, I 'spose," grunted the obstacle doubtfully, and Fox's way was clear.

He stood within a roomy skittle alley transformed for this night only into the prize ring, ropes, stakes and all complete.

With a luck which persistently stuck to him through most of his doings, Fox Kneller had arrived just as the great fight was about to commence, and the consequent excitement and influx of the stragglers from the bar combined to cover Fox's entrance, which might otherwise have more nearly coincided with his exit than would have been pleasant.

There must have been many present whose knowledge of Fox Kneller's features was too good for them to be deceived by even such an excellent disguise as a square-cut goatee-beard. Had he been recognised, it was probable that the anomaly of an illegal prize-fight with an uninvited newspaper reporter present would not have struck the management unfavourably.

However, Fox contrived to establish himself in a comparatively dark corner, and chuckled as he saw the two vestrymen contentedly puffing cigars just opposite.

For a thoroughly detailed description of that fight between the "Bristol Darkey" and the local "Marsh Sparrow," I must refer you to the following day's issue of the *Southern Star*, which may be seen on the file at the office. Fox gave no particulars as to place or people beyond the principals, but he was very entertaining concerning the way in which the master of the ceremonies unceasingly requested the spectators to "pit their hands together, gents," and that same gentleman's humourous suggestion of a "collection" at the end of the ninth round "to get a bottle of stove-polish for the Darkey's face," which had become somewhat dilapidated.

Fox had been fairly well hardened by inquests and such-like functions, but he felt relieved when the local "Sparrow" lay on the sawdust completely finished, with both eyes closed up, one ear hanging loose, and his nose a mere sanguinary excresence.

Then he quietly slipped round behind the feverish, shouting crowd—which included the orange-haired barmaid—and darted out into the fresh air.

On his way he had to pass the vestrymen. He resisted a strong temptation to reveal himself to them and hurried on. Another quick change at the shrubbery and Fox arrived at the station about thirty minutes before the train which was to bear his "copy" to headquarters left Marsh Royal station.

During the e thirty minutes he sat in a waiting-room and wrote deliriously. As the train came in he sealed up his "frank," and handed it to the guard with a gasp of relief.

"Ah, how do, Fox?" said a well-known voice behind him.

It was Jimmy Kent with his social "item" also for the guard.

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"What's on to-night—fire—suicide—floods—what is it?" he inquired curiously, for Fox bore a hot, dishevelled appearance, as though he had been running an obstacle race. But a moment was enough for him, so he answered airily:—

"Oh, nothing particular, been up to see an aunt about a tea-cosy," and he winked with a Don Juan-like expression.

"An, naughty, naughty!" said Jimmy, gurgling deeply and wiping the moisture from his streaming eyeglasses.

"Yes, exactly!" concurred Fox absently. Then he used disreputable language to himself behind his coat-collar. He had caught a glimpse of the churchwarden and the drill-sergeant further down the platform. They had evidently not kept their cab, and were going home by the same train as Jimmy Kent and Fox himself, due in a few minutes. Should his rival get within half a dozen yards of those two loud-talking idiots he *must* smell a rat, and then the fat would be in the fire, for the *Dawn* acted royally, and had private telephone wires between the head office and its chief representatives. Jimmy could go home and reel off the whole thing before he went to bed—provided he got the chance.

All this flashed through Fox's brain in a few seconds. His course was clear. He must monopolise the *Dawn* man until he was safe home for the night.

"I saw you go by the club to-night," said Jimmy.

Fox shuddered involuntarily.

"You did—where were you?"

"I was looking out from one of the windows—I'd swear to your straddle anywhere," Jimmy said, complacently lighting a cigarette. "Had half a mind to shadow you just as you did me once, when Sir Tommy was here—only the beastly rain, you know."

"Oh," grunted Fox, wondering if he could lure his companion into the waiting-room and keep him there discussing the texts.

Jimmy Kent's sight was of a peculiar pattern. Had he passed Fox in the street he would probably not have recognised him, but the further an object was from him the more clearly he saw it. It was commonly asserted amongst his brother pressmen that when he read at his lodgings he put the book up in his bedroom and then sat comfortably downstairs and perused it through a crack in the ceiling.

Jimmy Kent wondered long after he got to bed what had come to Fox Kneller that night, ranging furiously as he did from Hypnotism, through Motor-cars, Rudyard Kipling, Socialism, Art and the Drama to parsnip culture, until he made poor Jimmy's head swim, walking him swiftly up and down a section of the platform the while.

When the train came in, Fox rushed his victim into an empty compartment, and after drawing down the blinds, sank suddenly into silence. When they reached their station his electrical behaviour recommenced, and he persisted, to Jimmy's great astonishment, in seeing him home, leaving him at the door with what seemed an almost maniacal laugh.

* * * * *

Next morning at the police-court, Jimmy Kent looked across at Fox Kneller and furtively shook his fist.

"You sweep!" said he, "you and your confounded parsnips!"

"All serene," replied Fox, ostentatiously refolding a copy of the *Southern Star* with "Brutal Prize Fight Last Night" outwards. L. H. Harolds.

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A. Cramphorn, 28 Woodlands Rd., Leytonstone, N.E.

Below is a list of the people who failed to apply:

Jas. Paton, 2 West Street, Ibrox Terrace, Broomloan, Govan, Glasgow; W. Landell, 89 High Street, Edinburgh; John Tabb, 4 Brighton Terrace, Penzance; Patrick Clarke, 29 Windham Square, Plymouth; Alf. Robinson, 5 West End Lane, Hampstead, N.W.; H. Noakes, 29 Castle Street, Upton Park, N.; W. E. Stone, Bexley; W. Walters, 15 George Street, Croydon; Chas. Ruffell, 41 Atwell Road, Peckham, S.E.; E. Spelling, 65 Granville Street, Keighley; John Bingley, 16 Grace Street, Sheffield; Miss B. Henderson, 313 Fratton Road, Portsmouth; W. Needham, 81 Nottingham Street, Rotherham; Mrs. S. Harris, Cintra, Granville Road, Cowes, Isle of Wight; Chas. Parker, 25 Lea Bale Road, Guildford; Miss Osborn, 9 Spencer Road, Putney, S.W.; H. Mersh, Station Road East, Weybridge; Thos. Roope, 41 Victoria Road, Deal; H. King, New Pier Hotel, Station Road, Herne Bay; J. H. Fairhead, 55 Mount Zion, Tunbridge Wells; W. Philips, 66 West Street, Stratford-on-Avon; Jas. Oldaire, 20 Stove Street, Oldbury, Worcester; Jas. Hunt, Tunnel Hill, Worcester; Robt. Potts, 8 Victoria Terrace, Jarrow-on-Tyne; Jas. Young, 44 Stanhope Street, Tyne Dock, South Shields; Henry Busher, 2 Moor View, Newcastle-on-Tyne; Jas. Robinson, 47 Main Street, Keswick; John Bowstead, 6 Church Street, Berwick-on-Tweed; Geo. Tyson, 5 Peppercorn Lane, Kendal, Westmoreland; Turner Russell, 2 Hemingford Terrace, Conway Street, Birkenhead; Alf. Evans, 1 Lower Bridge Street, Chester; John Robinson, 66 Victoria Road, Seacombe, Cheshire; T. H. Carver, Yew Tree, Garway, Ross; David Gaussen, Marion Hall, Shrewsbury; Jos. Jenner, 49 Castle Street, Cambridge; Mrs. Smith, 5 Avenue Road, Norwich; Mrs. Leggett, 82 Lower Cliff Road, Gorleston, Yarmouth; R. Powling, Kemball Street, Ipswich; Alf. Gillott, 31 Derby Road, Heanor; Geo. Thompson, 26 Ryeland Crescent, Nottingham; Sam Long, 28 Cecil Road, Leicester; U. King, Great Easton, Uppingham; W. Birkett, Abbey Street, Worksop; Albt. James Nowell, 1 Spa Road, High Street, Southampton; N Cavanagh, 23 King Street, Victoria Docks; F. D. Nicholson, 3 Almorah Road, Islington, N.; F. W. Finch, 34 Garter Street, Walworth, S.E.; G. A. J. Hopkins, 1 Gloucester Terrace, Kew Green, Surrey; James Walker, Selkirk Street, Hamilton; John Arthur 12 Beaufort Street, Brynmawr; Jos. Bailey, 158 Albert Road, Middlesborough; Miss Dabb, Gascoigne Villa, Hornsea-with-Burton, Yorkshire; Thomas Edginton, 17 Park Street, Windsor; H. Fisher, The Briar, West Road, Bowdon; George Gathouse, Holyhead Road, Coventry; A. Harnden, 2A Mortimer Street, Herne Bay; John James, Hill Street, Halesowen, Worcestershire; A. Killaway, 24 Station Road, Romsey, Hants; W. Lambert, 43 Bruce Street, Dunfermline; W. Mann, Dunstable Street, Ampthill, Bedfordshire; George Negus, Godmanchester, Hunts; C. E. Oldacres, 3 New Street, Daventry; Andrew Phelan, Main Street, Maryborough; Major Ross, Rosstrevor House, Rosstrevor; Miss Searle, 2 Raleigh Terrace, Exmouth; John Thomas, Clahar Crescent, Mullion, Cornwall; G. J. Woodroffe, 141 Chatsworth Road, Chesterfield; J. Vasey, 10 Carter Gate, Newark-on-Trent; M. Allard, 23 The Square, Market Harborough; Geo. Burton, Northgate Street, Oakham; J. Cattle, 154 Trinity Street, Gainsborough; J. Duffett, Bath Road, Keynsham, Somerset; Mrs. Evans, Queen's Square, Winchcombe, Glos.; Miss Fish, Lightburn Cottage, Ulverston, Lancs.; John Green, 43 Havelock Street, Blackburn; Percy Hall, 79 Hills Road, Cambridge; P. H. Impson, 5 St. Mark's Villas, City Road, Norwich; John Inkpen, Ipswich Road, Stowmarket; Miss Jay, New Street, Ledbury; Roff King, 38 Church Street, Wellington, Salop; G. S. Lamb, Three Tuns, Sodhouse Bank, Gateshead Fell; G. E. Macarthy, 4 Front Street, Tynemouth; G. Nicholson, 12A Burrowgate, Penrith; Mrs. Oram, 6 Castle Street, Kendal; Geo. Jones, Sandy Road, Worksop; Mrs. Beech, Stafford Road, Oakengates; C. Condy, Endsleigh Place, St. Mary Church; A. E. Lower, 51 Station Road, Horsham, Sussex; W. Rees, 16 Alexandra Road, Broadstairs; E. Packman, 10 Arbroath Road, Dundee; C. F. Frost, 11 Bosworth Road, Rugby; Mrs. E. E. M. Mapel, East Bank, Golborne, Lancs.; Mrs. Hill, 58 Clarence Rd., West St., Sutton; Thos. Biggs, St. Sampson's, Guernsey; C. M. Woolsey, 47 Park Hall Rd, East Finchley, N.; A. Wells, 64 James St., Oxford; H. Hands, 12 Lawford Rd., Rugby.

Sandy Carmichael.

By CUTCLIFFE HYNE.

Author of "The Adventures of Captain Kettle," etc., etc.

BOOK II.—CONCERNING THE - - VOYAGE IN THE SOUTH SEAS.

SUMMARY.

A MAJOR and a cornet of Sheridan's Horse seek refuge in the wilds of Lochaber after the battle of Culloden Moor. They are joined by another refugee, Murtagh O'Neill. The major succumbs to wounds received in the engagement, and a troop of heavy cavalry discover the hiding place of the remaining two fugitives, and give chase to them.

They manage to get away safely and reach St. Peter's Strait, where they discover a trading cutter standing apparently empty. They take possession and make off with their prize before the owner's return. A boy appears out of the forepeak and volunteers to act as pilot, and they decide on a cruise to France.

The cutter is run down in a fog by a British schooner, giving the fugitives only just time to escape on to the larger vessel as their own goes to the bottom.

CHAPTER I.

How his Excellency the Governor of Lima was boarded by deputy; how he sent out the St. Thérèsa *to work his vengeance; and how that same vengeance recoiled on his Excellency's own head.*

His Excellency the Governor of Lima was coming into Callao as fast as his Excellency's coachman could urge the team of six mules that drew his Excellency's carriage. His Excellency the Governor was a little dark man, with a thick black moustache, the ends of which turned up the hill, and like their owner, fairly bristled with importance. His Excellency reclined at ease on the back seat, and opposite him, sitting bolt upright, were his Excellency's aide-de-camp, and the Captain of the Port of Callao. These two last gentry would have enjoyed this hot seven-mile drive better, if they too had been lying back on the cushions behind them; but his Excellency the Governor was a great stickler for punctilio, and would not dream of allowing such a thing.

"And so," said his Excellency to the Captain of the Port, "you sent these pestilential Englishmen a cartel this morning, bidding them depart from these seas forthwith, or be considered as pirates and suffer the consequences."

"I did, your Excellency, and warned them that we would send the *Santa Thérèsa* out against them if they were not standing away from the coast by midday."

"And their answer was?"

"Their answer," replied the Captain of the Port, "was to bundle the messenger neck and crop into his boat, and bid him go to the nether regions. And as he rowed off, one shouted to him to tell your Excellency—he used terms of opprobrium which I will not sully my lips by repeating—to tell your Excellency that the sea was made for all men, and especially for Irishmen, and maybe Englishmen, and that the King of Spain was a fool to try and look up an ocean, since there was nothing the men of his country liked better than to use their swords as a key."

"Blasphemous heretic!" exclaimed his Excellency. "If the messenger can point him out, I'll have that man hanged when his ship is taken."

"So it please your Excellency," replied the Captain of the Port, "the messenger said he should recognise the man again; besides which, we have his name. He shouted out a challenge as the messenger left. 'If any o' them big-wigs ashore has the pluck to feel that they're insulted, tell 'om that it's Murtagh O'Neill that's the man to meet 'em wid pistols, hanger, or boardin'-pike, av they'll give him a shtrip of level beach an' fair play.'"

"Murtagh O'Neill," hissed his Excellency. "'Tis an outlandish name, but I shall remember it when the time comes. And the schooner, where is she now? After boasting and bragging, they ran away, I suppose?"

"No, your Excellency; it grieves me to say that she did not. In fact, the accursed vessel is hove-to a mile off the

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Men . . . busily engaged . . . scrubbing clothes.

shore even now. And—and——" the Captain of the Port stammered.

"And what?" snapped his Excellency testily. "Speak out, man!"

"Your Excellency, they have had the insolence to lash a broom to their mainmast head."

His Excellency swore in fluent Spanish that he would chastise these heretics, who had bearded him, before he was a day older, and then inquired whether they were holding themselves in readiness for action. Whereupon the Captain of the Port replied that the pestilential intruders were employing the time in washing their garments, and hanging them up in various parts of the rigging to dry; at which evidence of how little they cared for him or his authority, his Excellency very nearly fumed himself into a fit. By this time the carriage had driven into Callao, which lay at the water's edge,* and his Excellency was able to see how matters lay for himself. Out there beyond the island of San Lorenzo, with its mole and ship-yard, sliding gracefully over the long Pacific rollers below, lay a shapely schooner, hove-to on the larboard tack. She was riding almost stern-on to the shore, and when her bows rose on the swell, one could see her white decks dotted here and there with men leaning over sundry wash-tubs, with sleeves rolled up above the elbow, and hands busily engaged in the homely operation of scrubbing clothes. Above their heads, festooned on lines depending on the rigging, hung sundry grotesque evidences that the occupation had been going on for some time; whilst above all, lashed to a slender spire of wood that the vessel's movements caused to describe cones and arcs of circles in space, was a humble, deck-scrubbing besom, whose significance was beyond misconception.

* The old town of Callao was destroyed by earthquake in the succeeding year, viz., 1746. The new town lies further inland.

His Excellency grated his teeth, tugged at his black moustache, abused his underlings, and strutted up and down like an excited bantam cock for some considerable time. Then he remembered the battery on the mole, and ordered its guns to be manned. The English were half-a-mile out of range? Carramba! He always knew them to be cowards. Then the *Santa Thérèsa* must put out and annihilate them.

This being the most obvious order to give, it had been more or less anticipated. The *Santa Thérèsa* was a most majestic and most cumbersome two-decker, built in the year of grace 1634. She had aftercastle and forecastle, barricades, and close-quarters; she had three huge poop lanthorns, each large enough to hold half-a-dozen men, and bulky round tops on her pole masts. Batteries bristled from every part of her, expected and unexpected. In gilding and carved wood-work, she was rich beyond description; and on her stern was a splendid picture of *Santa Thérèsa*, from the brush of a renowned artist. Her early designers had fitted her with courses and topsails only; but the rigger of later days had added a fore and main topgallant; so that now she could spread a goodly show of canvas.

A vessel of this size—she was over twelve hundred tons—naturally requires a heavy crew; and, in view of the emergency, men had been pressed from every craft in the harbour to serve aboard her. These had been bustling about various duties long before his Excellency the Governor put in an appearance; and directly the formal order was given for her to go out and give battle, every available soldier in garrison was marched on board of her. She had her powder on board, and being plentifully supplied with small arms, bullets, round shot, and similar engines of destruction, the Governor said that there was no occasion for her to delay a moment longer.

He felt as though a hot branding-iron was being held against some unseen part of his person. Let her fly at this insolent foreign cur's throat, and worry it to death. The Captain of the Port, who had a brother on board the *Santa Thérèsa*, ventured to suggest that it was unwise to put to sea with no provisions on board, and with water-casks gaping with the drought. But his Excellency snapped him up in the moment. "Do you think," he almost screamed, "that it is a campaign we are entering upon? Do you dare to tell me that yon accursed craft will be floating on the seas at sundown? No; she will be sunk at the first broadside. The holy power of Spain knows how to avenge an insult in a way that makes men chary of boarding her a second time. I tell you, Senor, I will not have that vessel brought in to contaminate His Majesty's harbour of Callao. If she doesn't sink, she shall be burnt. And of her crew, if any chance to be saved, I'll send them to the mines for the remnant of their miserable lives: excepting always that miscreant Murtagh O'Neill, for whom no death can be too bad, however slow and bitter."

Thus, his Excellency the Governor of Lima.

Meanwhile the *Santa Thérèsa* cast off from the mole, and stood across to the shallow spit which forms the other side of the harbour; whence, after a narrow shave of missing stays and going ashore in the surf, she managed to clear the mole, and draw gradually out to sea. The breeze was westerly, and the English schooner lay dead to windward of her. This was unfortunate, for the *Santa Thérèsa* had but little pace except when running free. But there was no help for it, and her commander kept her on down the coast, hoping that she would look up to the schooner on the next tack, and perhaps get the weather-gage of her.

Meanwhile his Excellency had marched solemnly up to the mole, with his suite in dutiful attendance. The road took a considerable circuit, and they were nearly an hour over it; all the time being out of sight of the sea. But as there was no sound of firing, they concluded the action had not commenced.

"She has run away," his Excellency asserted. "She ran the very moment she saw the *Santa Thérèsa* begin to move

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out of harbour. Cowards! I always did say that the Englishmen could brag and boast with any one, but that they'd never stand up for an equal fight."

But when directly afterwards his Excellency stood up upon the ramparts, and noted that objectionable English schooner in almost exactly the same position she had occupied before, and saw her pestilential crew still occupied with their laundry work, then his Excellency thought within himself that he had been rather premature in his remarks, and regretted having given utterance to them. But he did not own to his mistake aloud. No. He anathematised the impudent schooner with all the power that the Spanish language is capable of. He swore that she was staying on to the last moment out of sheer bravado, and declared that she would turn tail and endeavour to escape ere ever the *Santa Thérèsa* came within gunshot.

His suite remained respectfully and judiciously silent. His Excellency seldom brooked contradiction at all; and in his present mood he would resent it violently. Besides, their own vessel had gone about, and was approaching surely, if slowly, on the larboard tack. She would be in range directly; and if the English schooner did not wait till the last moment, and then show a quick pair of heels—well—she could not avoid capture.

But the English crew phlegmatically continued rinsing and wringing out their spare garments, apparently in no wise disturbed by the great engine of destruction that was bearing down upon them.

The Spaniards on shore could not make it out at all. Here was their huge war vessel almost within the range of her heavier guns, and the intruder did not so much as deign to notice them. Surely there must be some ruse in store. But what could it be? They began to look askance at one another. Spaniards were almost as superstitious then as they were a couple of centuries before, and more than one whisper of "Art-magic," "Aided by their patron saint, the devil," "Infernal agency to fall back upon," and the like was freely passed around.

And certainly, from an onlooker's point of view, it did look uncanny. The schooner was not more than two hundred tons burden, if that; and the Spanish carrack was, as I have said, at least twelve hundred. The one was flush decked, and low in the water. All her men would be exposed to an enemy's fire. The other towered high above the sea, and had almost all her fighting crew snugly ensconced behind stout wooden battlements. The English craft boasted of less than eighty men. The Spaniard had a complement of four hundred, and six times her small opponent's weight of heavy ordnance. Yet the schooner waited, with her crew hard at work washing, and apparently sublimely indifferent to the onset. Truly, from a spectator's gaze-point, there was something mysterious about the affair.

Nearer and nearer the *Santa Thérèsa* drew, and his Excellency, and his Excellency's suite on the mole, could scarcely breathe for excitement. She got within range, and several of the bow guns fired—three or four on either broadside popping off likewise; these last doubtless through accident.

As though touched by a magician's wand, the crew of the schooner seemed to throw off their torpor. The grotesque strings of drying garments came down on the decks in an instant. Up went foresail and jibs. The topsails were let fall and sheeted home. Fore-staysail-sheet was let draw, and before any of the Spaniards clearly knew what was happening, the schooner was passing across the *Santa Thérèsa's* bows, raking her at long range with her starboard battery; not blazing away at random, but firing every gun deliberately, as it bore. The large ship fell into great confusion. Ropes were flying, sails were perforated, and there were a dozen men lying in the crowded 'tween decks killed or wounded. Before they could pull themselves together, "Bang! Crash! Bang! Bang! Crash! Slish! Splinter! Bang!" came another broadside. The schooner had gone about like a top, and repassing close across her antagonist's bows, had raked her at pistol range with the larboard guns. These had been double shotted; but the charges were sufficient for the short distance, and the big Spaniard was riddled like a sieve.

There were a good many men killed, but worse than that (from a fighting point of view) the foremast, wounded by the first discharge, had parted, under the impact of a second shot just beneath the round top, bringing down the small-arm men who were aloft, forecourse, foretopsail, and foretopgallantsail, all by the run, leaving the foredeck in a most unholy hamper of blood, canvas, spars, and rigging. Add to which, the *Santa Thérèsa* forthwith refused to answer her helm, and lay stolidly head to wind, in spite of

His Excellency stood up upon the ramparts.

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all efforts to get her under control again. But she had not given in by any manner of means. Her rigging —what was left of it—was still gaudy with ensigns and banners, that of Spain being conspicuous in no less than three several places; and her commander, whatever his private opinion was of the probable outcome of the combat, had no intention of striking then, if at all. So he ordered the fire to be kept up, and his gunners blazed away with every gun which could be brought to bear, and with a good many which couldn't; thereby keeping their spirits up (through excitement), and doing about as much harm to the schooner and her crew as they would have done to the moon by heaving pebbles at her.

The soldiers were mostly employed as small-arm men, or sharpshooters; and at first they were as wild as the gunners below. But as, so they say, a regiment can always be steadied down if it is only fired into enough—for the survivors learn from the fate of their hotheaded comrades, that coolness and order is an essential—these Spanish soldiers began to see, after an hour's aimless burning of powder, that almost half their number were *hors de combat*, and

A third of the Englishmen was hit.

those that were left thought fit to use their match-locks more circumspectly, and to endeavour not to throw away a shot.

Meanwhile the schooner kept up a heavy fire at long range. Her guns were rapidly served, and accurately trained, and although not to be compared in number with those of the Spaniard, they were of heavier metal, and did ninety per cent. more execution. Indeed, save for a score or so of circular punctures in her canvas, a dozen or so of white splinter marks on bulwarks and lower sides, she was unscathed; and as for her crew, beyond a few trifling scratches here and there, no casualties had occurred amongst them so far.

But when the Spaniard's musketry fire steadied down, first one, and then another, and then a third of the Englishmen was hit; and the captain of the schooner, anxious if possible to lose none of his men, executed a manœuvre which he had mercifully spared the enemy till then, in the humane hope that the *Santa Thérèsa* would strike her colours without such terrible punishment.

With his schooner under full command—for all running and standing rigging had been made good directly it was shot away—he stood on ahead, and hove his vessel to athwart the Spaniard's bows. Half the larboard guns had been run over to the other side, and with this augmented battery he raked the great ship through and through, once —twice—thrice. The four tiny bow-chasers she could bring to bear were dismounted, and their gunners were swept into eternity. The carnage was immense. Flesh and blood could hold out no longer. Down came the gaudy flag of Spain from the peak. The *Santa Thérèsa* was a prize to the English schooner.

A prize crew was sent on board to take possession, and proceeded to try and efface as much as possible the injuries to spars and rigging which they had been straining every nerve to effect during the last few hours; and in the meanwhile the schooner lowered another boat, which put off to shore with a flag of truce. The men pulled round the point of the island of San Lorenzo, and brought up to the mole. The officer in the stern relinquished the rudder-lines, drew his sword, and tied a white pocket-handkerchief to it. Then he stepped ashore, and a lad with a drum slung to his neck followed.

"Strike up, Sandy," said the officer; and the youngster rattled away at the drum. He beat his rat-a-plan with more goodwill than talent, having, to tell the truth, but seldom handled drumstick before; but "the intention was good," as a certain Irishman afterwards remarked, and the pair of them, drum leading, marched up to a group of uniformed men who came down to receive them.

An aide-de-camp stepped forward.

"Do you speak Spanish?" he asked.

"Yes, Señor," replied the envoy.

"Then permit me to have the honour of presenting you to his Excellency Don José de Corrio y Vadez de Lato, the Governor of Lima—er—I did not catch your illustrious name —thank you; Señor Don Laurenzo de Sneyd, a native of the happy island of Ireland—ah, beg pardon—England. England; yes, of course. Stupid of me to make such a mistake."

His Excellency bowed; and Sneyd bowed too. His Excellency inquired after Don Laurenzo's health, complimented him on the share he had taken in the action (whatever that might be), and, in fact, was vastly polite. Sneyd, not knowing quite what to make of this, hinted that he had come on business, and that his time was short, and his captain expected him back on board; whereat his Excellency was pleased to state that everything of his, inclusive of his time, was entirely at the disposal of Don Laurenzo of Sneyd.

"Then," said Sneyd bluntly, "I've come to arrange a ransom for the *Santa Thérèsa*, her crew, this town of Callao, and the shipping that is in the harbour."

This was a tolerably large order, and at first it fairly took his Excellency's breath away. At length he managed to stammer:

"But, Señor, the town and shipping are under the guns of this fort. The *Santa Thérèsa* and the cowards who manned her I am prepared to treat for, but Callao and the shipping——"

A shrug of the shoulders completed the sentence.

"You thought the *Santa Thérèsa* a match for us, your Excellency," replied Sneyd, "or you'd scarcely have sent her out. And as for calling her crew cowards, it doesn't say much for the rest, as you doubtless sent the best you had,"

"Señor Sneyd," said his Excellency, "your words are very free."

"Maybe; but they are true, your Excellency. Let me see; we were two hours in beating the *Santa Thérèsa*—— Three hours, do you think, Señor? I give in to you. Three hours be it. Well, if that's the case, I should say we could silence the batteries here, and reduce the fort in about an hour and a half."

"Señor Sneyd," spluttered His Excellency, "I would have you remember that you are in my power."

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An *aide-de-camp* stepped forward.

"Señor Governor," responded Sneyd contemptuously, "even if you do neglect my flag of truce, I would remind you that there are such things as reprisals. What do you suppose would happen to your countrymen, who are snugly under the hatches of their own ship out yonder, if you hanged me? Remember who were the aggressors. We were peaceful traders along the coast till you interfered with us. The onus of what has happened must lie on your own heads."

"The law against other nations trading with Spanish colonies was passed by my master the King, Señor," interposed his Excellency, who saw that he had made a mistake, and wanted to exculpate himself on some point if possible. "I am but his humble servant. It is my duty to enforce it so far as lies in my power."

"We will not argue that question," said Sneyd, "as we should probably not agree upon it, and time is precious. I am sent here to treat for a ransom for—if it suits your conscience better to consider it so—ship and crew. But mind, the total may seem excessive, for we have town, fort, shipping, and all, totted up in our bill."

"Well, Señor," said his Excellency in a very constrained voice, "what do you assess them at?"

"Two hundred thousand pillar dollars,* your Excellency. Could any of you gentlemen oblige me with a cigarette?"

His Excellency gasped. "Two hundred thousand pieces of eight! Good Heavens! Señor, we have not so much money in the country!"

"As you are a gentleman, I must believe your Excellency although Lima is reported worthy of its name, 'City of Kings,'" replied Sneyd; "but, as I am a gentleman, believe me that we intend to have that precise sum, or its equivalent in specie, by to-morrow midday. If it is not forthcoming—you must take the consequences."

"And the consequences will be, Señor?"

"We haven't contemplated them, your Excellency," returned the envoy drily. "We judged that you would take the wise course, and not force us to extremities. Sacking a town is a very wasteful way of collecting one's revenues, for all parties."

"Señor, I must ask your permission to confer apart with my advisers. If you will accompany my aide-de-camp, he will see to your personal comforts so far as our humble resources permit of."

Sneyd bowed, and followed the aide, who led to a house where a sumptuous meal was laid out in readiness for the Governor.

"We may as well fall-to, Señor," said the aide-de-camp. "His Excellency won't have much appetite just now. Never mind the servants, we'll look after ourselves. Uncork that bottle of country wine beside you, and I think you'll own it's not bad; and let me give you a little of this pie. I can't tell you what's in it, but we may take the contents on trust, as his Excellency is the greatest epicure

* So named from their having the pillars of Hercules stamped on the reverse side. Also spoken of as "Pieces of Eight." Worth about 4s. 3d. The Spanish douro is the same to-day.

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in all South America. Allow me, as an enemy, though I hope a courteous one, to compliment you on the success of your arms to-day over ours. Considering the numbers engaged on either side, your efforts were something marvellous, and your courage wonderful."

"I thank you, Señor, in the name of my shipmates and myself, but I think you over-rate us. Your side was handicapped. Your vessel was, pardon my saying it, no match for our schooner. It was our fortune to have a craft which outmanœuvred yours, that was all."

"But, Señor Sneyd, that alone could not account for such a crushing defeat as you have dealt us. See the way your men worked."

"Your own countrymen strove just as hard, Señor, but they laboured under the disadvantage of no knowing their ship, their guns, their officers, each other. We perforce, through long herding together, have acquired this trivial knowledge. Send the *Santa Thérèsa* and her complement to sea for a week, and she'd be able to cope with six schooners such as ours, and thirst for more."

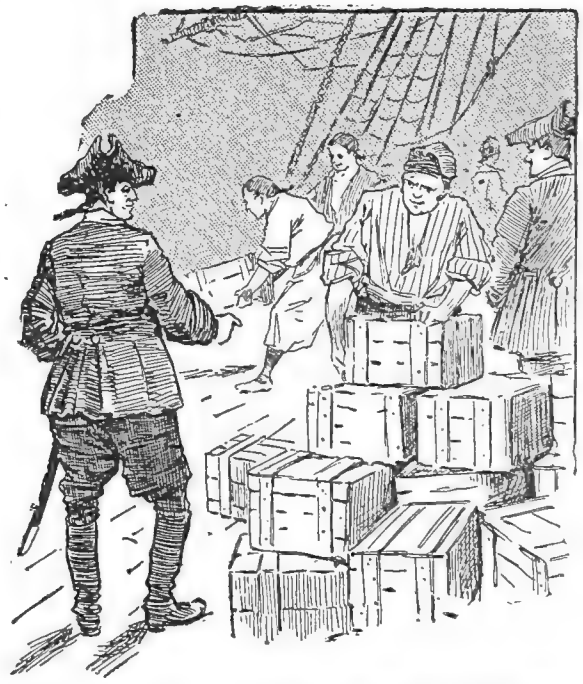
With such an interchange of compliment did the meal pass away, each decrying his own countrymen and praising his opponent's. The custom was truly Spanish, and new to Sneyd, but he picked it up quickly enough, and, determined not to be outdone in politeness, capped all the aide's pretty speeches with others even more unveracious and fulsome. Over their cigarettes and coffee, Sneyd artfully drew his companion out about the resources of the country; decried Lima, and got him to give a fairly accurate description of its wealth and prosperity; and so with the other points of interest in the neighbourhood. The Spaniard, jealous for the honour and credit of his adopted country, lauded it to the skies, showing up all its good points in the most favourable light. When he had come to the end of his eulogies, Sneyd said quietly, "Thanks, Señor; your country seems more blessed by nature than any other on earth; Midas would have felt a poor man in Peru; and I do not think that our trivial impost will draw more than a feather's weight from your exchequer's balance."

The Spaniard bit his lip. He saw the blunder he had been led into, but, grasping the fact that what had been said could not be recalled, regained his presence of mind again on the instant. "You English, Señor, are, it seems, our superiors in the gentle art of diplomacy, as well as the rougher art of war," he remarked, with a courtly bow. "Doubtless I should have withheld much of the information which you have so skilfully drawn from me, had I had sufficient forethought to see the obvious deduction you would take from it; but as matters stand you have gained your point, and I can only ask that you will not embroil me with my superiors by saying whence your knowledge of our circumstances was derived."

Sneyd assured him on this point, and went on to say, "In defiance of the embargo which your king has laid upon the vessels of foreign powers doing such a thing, we have been trading all up the coasts, and from the Indians, from the half-breeds, and from your own countrymen have we heard of the great wealth centred in Lima. So, Señor, it was only to confirm their report that I ventured to sound you on the point; and so you may comfort yourself with the assurance that you have told me nothing of vital interest that I did not know before. But here comes his Excellency."

Both Sneyd and the aide-de-camp rose to their feet as the little great man entered.

"I accede to your part of your demand, Señor Sneyd," said his Excellency. "The ransom you claim is beyond my power to deliver. But I faithfully promise to have one hundred and twenty thousand pieces of silver, or their value in uncoined specie, ready for embarkation by midday to-morrow. Think before you reject the offer, Señor," he continued, as he saw Sneyd was about to speak. "The sum is an immense one. By refusing it, you may get nothing at all."



The money . . . was taken on board, counted, and stowed away in the hold.

"And the *Santa Thérèsa* and her crew, your Excellency; what do you suppose will happen to them if our negotiations fail?"

His Excellency shrugged his shoulders. "They must abide by the fortune of war, Señor."

"Then, as your Excellency refuses to accede to my terms, I shall return on board, and my commander will carry out the threat as regards Callao and the shipping which I have had the honour to communicate."

"Your commander may not find the fort on the mole here so easy to reduce as he thought for, Señor Sneyd," sneered the Governor.

"That means you are marching men out of Lima to occupy it?"

His Excellency nodded. "They will be here in half-an-hour, Señor."

Sneyd coolly relit his cigarette. "Would your Excellency oblige me by sending someone to look out to seaward?"

An aide-de-camp left the room, and returning shortly, announced that the English schooner was heading into the harbour. Sneyd imperturbably watched the blue smoke rising from his cigarette. His Excellency's brow darkened. "What does this mean, Señor?" he demanded.

"It means, Señor Don José de Lato, that my captain isn't such a fool as you took him for. He had a man on his foret'gallant-yard from the moment of my landing. That man commanded the Lima road with a glass. He reported a mounted messenger galloping out from here—do I not speak correctly?—The drum beat to quarters forthwith, the guns were cast loose, and the schooner's decks cleared for action. Then the look-out reports that a body of troops is being marched out from the city and is heading towards Callao. The schooner is promptly headed towards the harbour."

His Excellency trembled with rage. "You are a bold man, Señor Sneyd, to beard me thus."

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"As I said before, your Excellency, a flag of truce—and dread of reprisal on the prisoners we hold—are my safeguards."

The Governor of Lima paced up and down the room like a bear in a cage.

"To prevent this bombardment," he said, "how shall I proceed?"

"Send a messenger to bid the soldiers march back again, your Excellency, and order two hundred and ten thousand dollars to be ready for handing over to me by midday to-morrow."

"How, Señor, do you think to trifle with me, and raise your demands in this arbitrary fashion? I would have you know that I, the vice-regent of his sacred Majesty the King of Spain, Governor of Lima, and——"

"Your Excellency, I pray you pardon my interruption, but kindly look through the window at your back. The schooner is just passing the spit, and putting down her helm to run up alongside here. She is handling some of her canvas, if you notice, and in five minutes will be at anchor. Directly after that my commander will open fire. He is not a man who brooks being trifled with."

The facts were apparent; and his Excellency, completely cornered, gave in without further demur. That the impudent little schooner would bombard his fort and town without further parley, if the money was not paid, he felt convinced; and he likewise was pretty tolerably confident that he would still have to find the ransom—perhaps with another substantial sum added to it—all the same.

So he said, "Señor Sneyd, I bow to the force of your stronger hand. My aide-de-camp starts this minute *ventre à terre* along the Lima road, to bid the troops fall back again into the city. The two hundred thousand dollars shall be ready by midday to-morrow."

"Two hundred and ten thousand, your Excellency, and not a maravedi less."

"Señor Sneyd, consider."

"Señor Don José de Lato, I would have you note that the schooner has run down head sails, and will be at anchor the moment way is off her."

His Excellency wrung his hands, vowed he was ruining his province, and promised that the full amount should be forthcoming; and Sneyd, walking smartly out of the room, waved a signal to the schooner to hold her fire.

It was a close thing. The guns had been run out; the men stood by them; linstocks were smoking: it needed only a word of command for the work of destruction to begin.

There came a hail from the schooner, "Are you and the boy all right, Sneyd?"

"All well."

"Are they going to pay up?"

"They promise to."

"D'ye know that a lot of soldier fellows are marching in along the Lima road?"

"Yes, I judged it from your turning up. But there's an order sent post haste for them to march back again."

"Oh, that's as well for all parties. But tell the dons that if they try any more of their 'anky-panky tricks, I'll blow the whole blessed place down about their ears."

Sneyd translated this polite message to the Governor, who had come out to him, and then the captain of the schooner hailed afresh—

"I say, Sneyd! Anybody know English there?"

"No," said Sneyd, "I don't think so."

"That's good. Who's that fat old chap at your elbow? 'Im with the black moustaches that are tickling his eyes?"

"His Excellency the Governor of Lima, with a name as long as the main-halyards. Call him Don José de Lato for short."

"H'm—funny sort of fish. Looks like the frog in the fable, who tried to blow 'isself up till 'e was as big as an ox. Well, tell 'im from me, that I'm going to quarter a boat's crew in that fort of 'is for the hevenin.' It'll take temptation out of 'is way. If the place was empty 'e might 'avo a shy at throwing some men into it after dark, and blazing away at us when we weren't ready for 'em. Say we'll clear out when the stuff's handed over without damaging anything, if we ain't annoyed."

Sneyd toned down the rough edges of the message in his translation, but even in its honeyed form the pill was a bitter one for his Excellency to swallow. It showed that the commander of the English schooner didn't trust him. And what made this all the more poignant, was a strong hint from his Excellency's own conscience that the Englishman was acting very judiciously; for, to tell the truth, his Excellency had been conning over a little piece of mild treachery.

The schooner would lie peacefully at anchor, so he thought, and those of her crew who did not get drunk—Englishmen always tippled heavily in harbour, so he'd been told—those who didn't get tipsy would sleep very soundly after their hard day's work. If the fort could be stealthily manned under cover of the darkness, then he would get the upper hand. The schooner lay directly under the heavy guns of the fort, and before their crew knew where they were, their heretical craft would be sunk beneath them. The glamour of victory would blazon over the means taken to obtain it. Modified somewhat, the move could very well be described as a masterly piece of strategy, and, once he finished the affair successfully, that little mishap with the *Santa Thérèsa* could be easily glossed over or forgotten.

This was something like the outline of his Excellency's scheme, and here this brutal Englishman spoils it. Don José could have wept with annoyance. But he restrained himself. That particularly cool person, the envoy, was waiting beside him for an answer, and reluctantly his Excellency gave the desired concession. There was no help for it. There, in the middle of the harbour, was that infernal schooner showing her ugly broadside, and the gunners were standing beside their pieces, each with a smouldering linstock in hand. His Excellency the Governor of Lima was more neatly pinned than he had ever been in his life before, and as he most devoutly hoped never to be again.

The boat's crew, armed to the teeth, came ashore, amb'ed up to the fort and took possession, as if the doing so were the greatest lark in the world; and the discomfited Spaniards had to look on non-interferent. His Excellency felt himself a ruined man. No amount of twisting and turning could get over the fact that the batteries of his seaport had been occupied by a handful of English free lances. Euphuism has its limits, even in a Spanish officer's despatches. Still, there was no help for it, and so he and his suite sorrowfully wended their way back to Lima to arrange for the ransom.

The money paid—either in specie, or coined dollars—they knew that their incubus would leave them. For, strangely enough, though they would not have hesitated in the least to further their own cause by treachery, and lies, and deceit, they had a perfect confidence that the English would evacuate the place, so soon as ever they had been paid off.

And so it turned out. The money collected from one place and another—from the royal treasury in part, and the balance by loans from the merchants—the money, packed in boxes, was brought down by a string of mules in the early morning, taken on board, counted, and stowed away in the hold; and then after recalling her men from the shore, and hoisting in boats, the schooner weighed her anchor, and, putting out to sea, disappeared into the distance.

(To be continued.)

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A Last Visit.

THEY called her Queen Elizabeth in Burford. No one knew why. Perhaps because she spoke with authority, like an officer in command, or because she was big, bony and imperious.

Possibly, also, because she governed a small kingdom of dumb creatures—hens, dogs, cats, canary birds, parrots—all things dear to an old maid's heart. She ruled these, her subjects, with a rod of iron; she was not given to any weakness of pet names, or loving, caressing words, such as flow so easily from the lips of most women. On the contrary, she governed with authority; she resigned absolutely.

She was harsh of voice, stiff of mein; she brooked neither contradiction, replies, hesitation, illness nor fatigue. She herself was never known to complain, never heard to regret anything, never to envy anyone. "Every one has his day," she said with the conviction of a fatalist.

She never went to church, she despised the clergymen, and hesitated not to express her contempt for all religious observances.

During the thirty years that she lived in the little house, with its tiny garden in front, she had altered nothing. The only change ever made was the implacable dismissal of her little servants when they reached their twenty-first year. There were no futile tears nor regrets wasted over her numerous dogs, cats, birds, when they died off by accident or of old age; she simply dug a little hole in the corner of the garden, threw them in, kicked the dirt over them, and calmly found a new subject to fill the place of the departed one.

Her few acquaintances in town were among the families of clerks employed in the neighbouring town during the day. Occasionally these people invited her to have tea with them. She invariably fell asleep at all these festivities, and had to be aroused when the time came to go home. No one was ever allowed to accompany her by day or night. She never appeared to care for children.

She spent her time like a man—carpentering, gardening, cutting wood with a saw or chopping it with an axe, keeping the old house in repair, even doing a mason's work when necessary.

She had two sisters, Mrs. Briggs and Mrs. Wood, the one having married a dealer in medical herbs, the other a man of small independent means. These people came to see her twice a year. The Briggses had no children. The Woods were blessed with three—Harry, Margaret, and Joseph. Harry aged twenty, Margaret seventeen, and little Joseph, only three.

No affection seemed to exist between the old maid and her relatives.

In the spring of 1882 Queen Elizabeth fell suddenly ill. The neighbours called in the doctor. She promptly ordered him about his business. The curate also put in an appearance. She jumped out of her bed, and chased him from the house.

The poor little maid, in despair, made herb tea for her.

After three days in bed, her condition became so grave that the cooper next door had a consultation with the doctor, and thereupon took the responsibility of sending for her relations.

The two sisters, with their respective spouses, arrived by the same train, about ten o'clock in the morning. The Woods brought little Joseph with them.

At the garden gate, the first thing they saw was the little maid, leaning disconsolately against the side of the house, and weeping bitterly.

The dog lay asleep in the sun. The cats lay stretched at full length on either window-sill, their eyes shut, their tails extended. A big hen, surrounded by a brood of chicks, clucking noisily, strutted about the yard. A big cage hung against the wall, covered over with chickweed, and in it a number of birds were singing themselves hoarse in the joyous brightness of the spring morning.

The doves, in another cage, sat tranquilly side by side on the perch.

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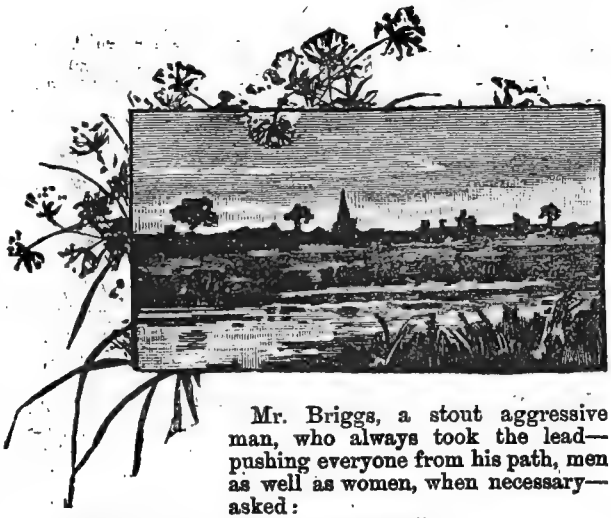

Mr. Briggs, a stout aggressive man, who always took the lead—pushing everyone from his path, men as well as women, when necessary—asked:

"Well, Clara, things going badly?"

The little maid sobbed through her tears:

"She doesn't know me now. The doctor says the end has come."

They all looked at each other. Mrs. Briggs and Mrs. Wood silently embraced. They were very much alike, these two women; they always dressed their hair alike, and wore red dresses and French bonnets of an amazing hue.

Briggs turned to his brother-in-law, a little, pale, jaundiced-looking man, who also, added to his other misfortunes, limped painfully, and said seriously:

"Ah! Just in time!"

But no one had yet dared to enter the chamber of the dying woman, which was on the ground floor. Even Briggs, always so consequential, ceded, for the time, the right of way. It was Wood who finally decided to enter first, forging along with the see-sawing motion caused by his lameness, and making the pavement ring with the iron ferrule of his stick. The two women next ventured, and Briggs brought up the rear. Little Joseph remained outside, beguiled by the sight of the dog.

A ray of sunlight lay across the bed, lighting up sharply the hand which twitched nervously, opening and shutting continually. The fingers moved as if animated by some fixed idea. The angular form lay rigid under the sheet. The eyes were closed.

The relatives formed a half-circle round the bed, watching, without speaking, the heaving breast and laboured breathing. The little maid followed them, still weeping. At last Briggs said:

"Tell me exactly what the doctor said."

The girl sobbed.

"To leave her alone. Nothing can be done," she replied.

All at once the old maid's lips began to move. She seemed to be saying to herself thoughts hidden in the dying brain, and her hands moved strangely.

Suddenly she spoke in a little thin voice scarcely recognisable—in a voice that seemed to come from afar, from the depths of this lonely creature's heart, possibly.

Briggs walked off on tiptoe, pained at the spectacle. Wood, whose crippled leg fatigued him, sat down.

The two women remained standing.

Queen Elizabeth continued to babble rapid, unintelligible words. She uttered many strange names, calling to them softly and tenderly. "Come here, my little Edith, kiss mamma. You love your mother? Tell me, child. You, Rose, must watch over your little sister while I am out. Be sure and not leave her alone, you understand? And you musn't touch the matches."

She was silent a moment, then, louder, as if some one was calling:

"Helen!" she waited a moment and then continued: "Tell your father to come and speak to me before he goes to the office." Then, suddenly: "I am not quite well this morning, dear; promise to come home early. Tell your chief that I am ill. You know it is dangerous to leave the children alone when I am in bed. I shall make a nice dish of curry for your dinner; the little ones love it. Won't Clara be glad?"

She laughed—such a laugh! with a young and happy ring in it.

"Look at Jackie, how funny he looks! All daubed over with jam, the dirty little fellow! Look, dear, isn't he funny?"

Wood, who fidgeted his lame leg, made stiff by the journey, muttered:

"She's dreaming she has children and a husband. The death struggle is beginning."

The sisters, dumb and stupid with surprise, never stirred.

"Won't you take off your bonnets and shawls, and come into this room?" asked the little maid.

They passed out without saying a word, and Wood followed limping, leaving the dying woman in solitude. Having laid aside their wraps, the women sat down. One of the cats left her seat on the window, stretched herself, hunched her back, and jumped into the room and upon the lap of Mrs. Briggs, who began to stroke her.

From the next room came the voice of the dying woman, living over, without doubt, in those last moments, the life she had long imagined and desired; rehearsing for the last time all her longings and dreams.

Briggs, in the garden, played with little Joseph and the dog, with all the pleasure of a man out for a holiday, forgetful of the departing soul.

Suddenly he entered the house and spoke to the maid:

"My girl, get us some dinner. What would you like, ladies?"

They decided on a rump steak and mashed potatoes, and as Mrs. Wood made a motion of searching for her purse Mr. Briggs stopped her, and, turning to the girl, said:

"You must have some money."

"Yes, sir," she replied.

"How much?"

"Fifteen shillings."

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"That is enough. Hurry, my girl, I begin to feel hungry."

Mrs. Briggs, looking out longingly at the garden bathed in sunlight, and at two pigeons coquetting on the roof opposite, remarked in a dismal way:

"Such a pity to be here under the circumstances. It would be lovely in the country to-day."

Her sister sighed without answering, and Wood, possibly dreading the suggestion of a walk, muttered:

"My leg hurts me awfully."

Little Joseph and the dog made a terrible noise, the boy shrieking in the excitement of play, the dog barking furiously; they tore round the little garden, chasing each other wildly.

The dying woman continually called her children, talking to each in turn, going through the form of dressing them, caressing them, and even teaching them to read.

"Come now, Jackie, say it after me, A, B, C, D. You don't try, dear. Listen, D, D, D. Do you hear? Try again."

"What extraordinary ideas people have at such moments," Briggs remarked.

Mrs. Wood asked: "Would it not be better to go and sit by her?" But Mrs. Briggs dissuaded her.

"What is the use? You can't do her any good. We are of quite as much use here."

Wood fidgeted, and banged his stick on the floor.

The other cat entered, tail in air.

One o'clock struck before they sat down to dinner.

They had scarcely tasted the wine when Wood, who had been ordered to drink Burgundy, and only of the choicest vintage, called the servant.

"My girl, is there nothing better than this in the cellar?"

"Yes, sir, there is the wine that has always been served to you when you were here before."

"Well, bring us three bottles."

They seemed to enjoy the wine; not that it was anything very fine, but it had been fifteen years in the cellar. Briggs, smacking his lips pronounced it "good wine for an invalid."

Wood, possessed with a strong desire to have the wine for his own use, asked of the maid: "How much of it is still in the cellar?"

"Oh, a lot of it, sir. Mistress never drank any of it."

He then turned to his brother-in-law.

"If you don't mind, Briggs, I would like to make an exchange with you for this wine. It suits me admirably."

Joseph and the dog, having satisfied their hunger, went back to the garden.

Queen Elizabeth continued talking, but now in a lower voice: the words were barely audible.

When they had finished their coffee, they all returned to the sick room to ascertain the condition of the patient. She appeared to be calm.

They left her alone again and sat in the garden to better digest a good dinner.

All at once the dog tore about the chairs, rushing in and out, holding something in his mouth. The child chased wildly after him. Both disappeared in the house.

Briggs fell asleep in the sunlight.

The dying woman began to talk aloud. All at once she cried out.

The two women and Wood hurried in. Briggs awoke but did not stir; he disliked such scenes.

She was sitting up in bed, a wild look in her eyes. The dog, to escape pursuit, had leapt up on the bed, jumped over the poor thing, and entrenched himself behind the pillows. He looked at his little comrade with shining eyes, ready to begin the fray again. He held in his mouth one of his mistress's slippers, all in rags from the rough play.

The child, frightened by the woman who had so suddenly confronted him, stood still, gazing at the bed.

Queen Elizabeth cried with a piercing voice:

"No, no, I will not die. I will not. I will not. Who will bring up my children? Who will take care of them? Who will love them? No, no, I cannot, I cannot. I——"

She fell back. All was over.

The dog, still full of excitement, jumped to the floor, bounding about.

Wood ran to the window, and called his brother-in-law: "Come, quick! Come, quick! She's gone!"

Then Briggs arose, and resuming his usual important air, stalked into the death chamber, saying:

"Thank goodness, it's over!"

GEORGE MARRYATT.

"Was your ship crippled by the storm?" asked the reporter. "She was not," replied the captain, "though she lost all her hands."

HAZEL: "Weren't you awfully afraid the first time you crossed the ocean?"

Nuttie: "Well—er—for a time I did feel a sort of groundless apprehension."

CUSTOMER: "Tell me, waiter, why do you only recommend stewed tripe to-day. Is it so excellent?"

Waiter (confidentially): "No, it isn't even fresh, but if there's anything left we have to eat it."

"I'd like to know when you are going to pay this bill I can't call here every day."

"H—m! What day would suit you best to call, then?"

"Saturday."

"Very well; call every Saturday."

"THE only way for a man to learn all about women is to get married."

"And study the ways of his wife, eh?"

"Naw. Listen to what she tells him about the other women."

HAD TRIED THEM.—Little Dot: "Mamma read in a paper that a deaf man in the country was stung by a swarm of bees, and now he can hear as well as ever."

Little Dick: "I don't see how bee-stings could make a deaf man hear—but I should think they'd make a dumb man speak."

IN a Houston family, which was in rather poor circumstances, the arrival of a wealthy aunt was expected. The aforesaid aunt, by some accident or other, had lost a portion of her nose. The children were reminded frequently not to make any reference whatever to the defective nasal organ. The wealthy aunt arrived; but she had scarcely taken off her bonnet when the littlest kid in the flock exclaimed:

"Papa, you told us not to say anything about aunt's nose. Why, she hasn't got any nose at all!"

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. . . Not Proven. . . .

KOTELMANN is a man with whom I have no sympathy. He is undoubtedly a very clever fellow, but the uncanny expression of his face when he looks up is to me positively repulsive.

For all that he is excellent company. I have spent many hours, many an evening, in his society and must, in fairness, own that I have never found him wearisome or dull.

Not long ago I took a walk with him. As we sauntered through the stubble-fields we discoursed of this and that, and at last we got upon the topic of the latest murder which had been reported in the press.

Kotelmann, as we talked about these things, had the look that always made my hair stand on end. We were discussing the question of circumstantial evidence and its value.

"In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred," I remarked, "there is nothing else to be done but to convict the criminal upon circumstantial evidence. No man in his senses would perpetrate a murder in the presence of an eye-witness."

"Probably not," returned Kotelmann slowly. "That kind of thing is usually done in private. It may so chance, however, that an eye-witness is present of whom the murderer has no cognisance."

After making this remark, he walked by my side for a while in silence, apparently deep in thought. Then he began again, in his characteristic fashion, "One may travel all round the world, and yet never witness a murder. I, however, have seen one."

"What! You—you have seen one!" I exclaimed almost terrified.

Kotelmann nodded assent.

"Explain yourself, man! Was the murderer caught? Was he punished?"

"It was no 'he' it was a 'she,'" said Kotelmann with a laugh. "And as she was not caught, it stands to reason that she was not punished."

"Yet you—" I began. My companion interrupted me. "I had nothing to do with it. My evidence was never called for or required. The thing was accomplished in the neatest and most refined manner possible. If you like, I will tell you the whole story."

I pricked up my ears.

"Four years ago I was spending my summer vacation at the little watering place of B—— This quiet, retired nest suited me well, and I stayed there for some time.

"In the house where I found a lodging there were already a number of other visitors, a fact which, to a sociable individual like myself, was in no wise distasteful.

"Among others I made a slight acquaintance with a family, consisting of an old gentleman, his young wife, and his daughter by a former marriage. The girl, a slim, delicate creature, apparently about twenty years of of age, was blind. She could not be termed pretty, but her personality was indescribably attractive, gentle, and, I may say, pathetic.

"The wife was a beauty! She had a splendid figure, and a pair of grey eyes not easily to be forgotten. I should judge her age to have been about twenty-eight. These people seemed to be in very easy circumstances, and kept themselves as much as possible apart from the other visitors.

"I can boast, as you are aware, of some gift of observation. Although my acquaintance with this family was, as I have already stated, but a slight one, I yet took some interest in studying the different members which composed it. For, wherever I go, I make it a rule to study all the new characters I meet.

"It was not long before I discovered three things concerning this trio. Firstly, that the old man was passionately in love with his wife, but had for his daughter neither eyes, ears, nor heart; secondly, that the daughter had an almost idolatrous reverence for her father, but a secret dislike for her step-mother; thirdly, that the wife had a downright hatred for the other two.

"None of the other inmates of our villa, however, had any suspicion of this state of affairs; to the superficial observer, these three persons appeared to be living together in perfect harmony.

"One morning, the old gentleman did not appear, and in answer to inquiries his wife said that he was ill. In the course of a day a physician was summoned to him, and in the evening our host imparted to me in confidence the distressing fact that the old man had been attacked by typhus fever, and lay now in a very precarious condition.

"The honest Thuringian well-nigh shed tears of chagrin; one would have thought to hear him, that the poor old gentleman had taken the fever out of sheer wickedness and spite, on purpose to give the house a bad name. There was some cause for this lamentation. The secret could not be kept long, and as soon as it became known

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that typhus was in the house, the visitors decamped with all speed. Only two or three, more reasonable than the rest, remained. I have no fear of infection, and when I told our host so I rose prodigiously in his estimation.

"Ten days after the beginning of the old gentleman's illness, I chanced to encounter the doctor, who was just descending the staircase.

"'Well,' said I, 'how fares it with our patient?'

"'Oh,' answered he, 'the symptoms are very favourable. The crisis is over—or all but over. We know, of course, that he is an old man, and his constitution is weak—extremely weak. If he pulls through, as I trust he will, he will have his wife and daughter to thank for it—especially his daughter. That girl is a born nurse; He is asleep now, and upon this sleep depends all.

"'If he awakes of himself in three or four hours' time, then humanly speaking, he will be out of danger. Everything depends upon this sleep! I have impressed upon Herr K., your landlord, the strict necessity of absolute quiet; he will give orders to the servants. Should the patient be frightened, startled out of sleep, there will be a catastrophe. His nervous system is so greatly depressed that the slightest noise in his proximity—such, for instance as the slamming of a door—would, in all probability prove as fatal as a bullet shot into his head or heart. I have warned his wife. Sleep is now everything—everything.'

"With these words the doctor put on his hat and departed. As I stood for a minute in the hall, thinking over what I had heard, Herr K. crept towards me on tip-toe.

"'Listen, Herr Kotelmann,' said he in an undertone. 'Fräulein von P., who was so brave at first, because she had been a Sister of Mercy, left my house early this morning. She took herself off because she was afraid of catching the fever. Are you, then, somewhat superstitious?'

"I laughed.

"'All right,' said he triumphantly. 'I came to tell you that, if you please, you can have the Fräulein's room. You will like its situation so much! It overlooks the whole valley, right away to the forest. You shall have it for the same price as you have been paying.'

"I was delighted.

"'Can I take possession at once?' I asked.

"'This very moment,' replied the landlord; 'the room stands empty. Ah!' he added, 'I forgot; it is next to the sick man's chamber. Will that make any difference to you?'

"I laughed and shook my head.

"'Very good! The room has been cleaned lately, and is quite ready for your reception.'

"I thanked him, and was ascending the stairs, when he softly called me back. 'Pardon me, Herr Kotelmann, I forgot again. The doctor has given orders that on no account may any sound be heard in the neighbourhood of the sick room. He says the old gentleman's life depends upon his sleep being undisturbed. Perhaps you will be so very kind as to defer moving your things until this evening?'

"I expressed myself perfectly satisfied with this arrangement; but as I felt curious to behold my new habitation, especially the belauded view from its windows, I—when the host had left me—stole with light steps along the corridor, opened the door with caution, and entered noiselessly.

"The room had a friendly look, and was large. The view was magnificent. After duly admiring this, I threw an approving glance over walls and furniture. I have already alluded to the fact that I am a keen observer of mankind. I may now add that I am an observer of things as well as persons. I possess the true detective's eye.

"This being the case, I very speedily remarked a weak spot in one of the walls. It was a tiny slit or hole, such as would have been discovered by most persons after a whole day's confinement in the room. A small nail just above it apprised me that the late occupant, Fraulein von P., must have been accustomed to hang some garment there.

"I approached this hole, and peeped through it into the sick man's chamber. The room contained three human beings. On the bed lay the old man in deep sleep. Beside the bed knelt his blind daughter, with clasped hands and bowed head, her whole attitude expressive of intensely earnest prayer. Behind the daughter I saw the wife; she alone was moving.

"In perfect silence, without producing the slightest sound, she was drawing along over the smooth surface of the wax polished floor a small table, whose marble top was laden with quite a dozen medicine bottles, and a number of glass vessels of various shapes and sizes.

"I did not at first comprehend her design. I knew very well that she had received strictest injunctions to make no sound. But when I caught sight of her face! It was the face of a fiend! Never could I have believed it possible that a human face could wear stamped upon it such a horrible expression of murderous hate! In an instant I understood.

"She was in the act of sliding the table into such a position that the least movement of the kneeling girl, absorbed in prayer for her beloved father, would be sufficient to overturn it with its fragile burden.

"I am, as you know, a somewhat cold-blooded fellow, but I can assure you that for the moment I was rigid with horror. I would have given the whole world to have been able to have warned that poor child. But what could I do? A call from me might be as disastrous in its consequences as the catastrophe itself.

"I stood dumb in terror, as if turned to stone. There was no time for thought. Before my whirling brain could suggest any expedient, the deed was done.

"The unhappy girl rose from her knees; with hands clasped, she stood up. I saw the table reel and totter, and as, half swooning, I averted my eyes, I heard the thud of the table and the awful crash of the breaking glass, followed immediately by an ear-piercing, blood-curdling scream."

Here Kotelmann made a pause. After a few moments of silence, he said:

"Give me a light, friend."

When he had lighted his cigar I asked him:

"Did the old man die?"

"He was as dead as though he had been shot through the head," he replied calmly.

Presently he continued:

"I had left the room before the commotion in the house began. It was never known that I was there. It was to me a terrible thought that I must spend the night in that chamber. I am not superstitious, but I must confess that it was long ere I closed my eyes that night.

"And when I did so! Ten times at least I started up from evil dreams with the crash and the fearful cry ringing in my ears. It was a full night before I could get any rest."

We walked on in silence until I spoke again.

"Have you ever heard what has become of the woman?"

"Oh, yes! She has married again; but the daughter, poor thing, died a year after her father." A. Hunt.

A Mother's Vengeance.

I had not been at Virelogne for twenty-three years. I went back there to shoot in the autumn with my friend Serval, who had built another cottage there, his first one having been destroyed by the Prussians.

One day I went on, watching my two dogs foraging ahead of me. Serval, a hundred yards away on my right, was beating a field of lucerne. I turned aside the bushes that formed the limit of the forest of Saudres, and I saw a cottage in ruins.

Suddenly I remembered it as I had seen it in 1869; clean, vine-clad, with chickens before the door. What sadder sight is there than a deadhouse, with its standing skeleton, dilapidated and forbidding?

I remembered also that a good woman had made me drink a glass of wine within one day when I was very tired, and that Serval had then told me the story of the inhabitants. The father, an old poacher, had been killed by the gendarmes. The son, whom I saw at the time, was a tall, bony fellow, who passed likewise for a ferocious destroyer of game. They were called the Savages. Was that a real name or nickname?

I hailed Serval. He came up with his long stride.

"What has become of the people who lived here?" I asked him.

And he told me this story:

"When war was declared, the son, then thirty-three years old, enlisted, leaving the mother alone in the house. The old woman did not receive too much sympathy, because she was known to have money. She stayed all alone in this isolated house, far from the village, on the outskirts of the wood. She was not afraid, for she belonged to the same race as her husband and son—a rough old woman, tall and thin, who did not often laugh, and with whom no one ever joked.

"Mother Savage continued her everyday life in her cottage, which was soon covered with snow. She visited the village once a week to get some bread and a little meat, then she returned to the hut. As there were rumours of wolves, she carried a gun on her back—her son's gun; it was rusty, and the stock worn from constant handling. She was a curious sight, this tall Mother Savage, a little bent, going with slow strides through the snow, the gun-barrel projecting above the black cap, which so effectually imprisoned her white hairs that no one had ever seen them.

"One day the Prussians came. They were distributed among the inhabitants according to the fortune and resources of each. With the old woman, who was known to be rich, they placed four.

"They were four big, light-haired, blue-eyed fellows, who had kept their flesh, in spite of the fatigue which they had already endured, and their good nature, although in a conquered country. Alone at this aged woman's house they were very thoughtful for her, saving her all the fatigue and expense that they could.

"All four were to be seen making their toilets round the well in the morning in their shirt sleeves, wetting their pink-white flesh, characteristic of men of the North, with an abundance of water, in the raw, snowy air, while Mother Savage came and went, preparing the soup. Then they were seen cleaning the kitchen, scouring the floors, chopping wood, peeling potatoes, washing linen, fulfilling all the household duties, like four good sons round their mother.

"But the old woman thought continually of her own boy, with his tall, thin figure, hooked nose, brown eyes, and big moustache. Every day she asked each of the soldiers installed at her fireside:

"'Do you know which way the Twenty-Third French Regiment went? My boy belongs to it.'

"They answered, 'No, not at all.'

"And understanding her pain and anxiety, because they had mothers of their own, they bestowed upon her a thousand little attentions. Besides, she was very fond of her four enemies, for peasants seldom feel the patriotic hatred that is monopolised by the upper classes. The humble—those who pay the most because they are poorest, and whom every new burden overwhelms; those who are killed in masses, forming, because of their numbers, real food for cannon; those, in short, who suffer the most cruelly from the atrocious miseries of war, because they are weakest and least able to resist—seldom understand the bellicose ardour, the excitable feeling of honour, and the pretended political combinations which in six months exhaust two nations—the victors as well as the vanquished.

"The neighbours said, speaking of Mother Savage's Germans:

"'There are four who have found a home.'

"But one morning, while the old woman was alone in her cottage, she saw at a distance over the plain a man coming towards her dwelling. She recognised him as the letter carrier. He handed her a folded paper, and she drew from their case the spectacles which she used in sewing; she then read:

"Madame Savage.—This brings you sad news. Your boy, Victor, was killed yesterday by a cannon ball that cut him in two. I was standing near, for we marched side by side in the company, and he asked me to notify you in case any misfortune should befall him. I have taken possession of his watch in order to restore it to you at the end of the war. I salute you as a friend.

Cesar Rivot.

Soldier of the 2nd Class in the Twenty-Third of the Line.

"The letter bore date of three weeks before. She did not weep. She remained motionless, so struck and stupified that as yet she did not suffer. She thought—'There's Victor killed now.'

"Then gradually the tears rose to her eyes, and grief invaded her heart. One by one ideas came to her, frightening and torturing her. Never more would she embrace her child—her big boy; never more!

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"The gendarmes had killed the father, the Prussians had killed the son. He had been cut in two by a cannon-ball. And it seemed to her that she saw the horrible sight—the head falling, the eyes open, while he bit the corner of his big moustache, as he had been wont to do when angry.

"But what had they done with his body? If they had only restored her child, as they had restored her husband with the bullet in the middle of his forehead!

"But she heard the sound of voices. It was the Prussians returning from the village. She quickly hid the letter in her pocket and received them tranquilly with her usual face, having had time to wipe her eyes.

"All four were laughing with delight, for they brought with them a fine rabbit, stolen, doubtless, and they made signs to the old woman that they were going to have a feast. She began directly the preparation of the breakfast, but when it came to the killing of the rabbit her heart failed her. Yet it was not the first. One of the soldiers hit it a blow behind the ears with his fist.

"She sat down at the table with her Prussians, but she could not eat a single mouthful. They did not heed, but devoured the rabbit. She looked at them side-wise, saying not a word, maturing an idea, her face so expressionless that they noticed nothing. Suddenly she asked:

"'Here we have lived a month together, and I do not even know your names.'

"They understood, not without difficulty, what she wanted, and told their names. That did not satisfy her; she made them write their names on a piece of paper, with the addresses of their families, then, resting her spectacles on her big nose, she considered the unknown writing, after which she folded the paper and put it in her pocket, on top of the letter which told of her son's death.

'When the meal was over she said to the men:

"'I am going to work for you.'

"And she began to carry hay into the garret where they slept. They were astonished at this act; she explained to them that they would not be so cold, and they helped her. They piled up the bundles till they touched the thatched roof, and thus they made a sort of large chamber with four hay walls, warmed and perfumed, in which they would sleep marvellously well.

"At dinner one of them became anxious on seeing that Mother Savage still ate nothing. She declared that she had no appetite; then she lighted a good fire to warm herself, and the four Germans went up to their lodgings by the ladder which they used every night.

"As soon as the trap-door was closed, the old woman took away the ladder, then noiselessly opened the outside door, and went to get some bundles of straw, with which she filled her kitchen. She went bare-footed in the snow, so softly that they heard nothing. From time to time she listened to the unequal snoring of the four sleeping soldiers.

"When she judged her preparations sufficient, she threw one of the bundles into the fire, and when it was well aflame, she scattered it over the others, went out, and watched.

"In a few seconds the entire interior of the cottage was illuminated with a raging light; then it became a frightful bed of coals, a gigantic glowing oven, from which gleams shot through the narrow window and threw dazzling rays upon the snow.

"Then a loud cry from the top of the house, followed by a chorus of human shrieks, heartrending appeals of anguish and fear. Then, having burnt through the trap-door, a whirlwind of fire burst into the attic, pierced through the thatched roof, and rose to the skies like an immense torch, and the whole cottage was wrapped in flame.

"Nothing was heard within but the crackling of the fire and the crumbling of the beams. The roof suddenly fell in, and the cottage's glowing carcase shot a great shower of sparks into the air, amid a cloud of smoke. The fields, lighted by the fire, shone like a sheet of silver tinted with red.

"A bell in the distance began to ring. Old Mother Savage remained standing before her destroyed dwelling, armed with her gun—her son's gun—for fear that one of the men might escape. When she saw that all was over she threw her weapon into the embers.

"A loud report rang out. People came hurrying up—peasants, Prussians. They found the woman sitting on a tree trunk, tranquil and satisfied. A German officer, who spoke French like a native, asked her:

"'Where are your sold ers?'

"She stretched out her thin arm towards the red mass of dying fire, and answered in a strange voice:

"'In there!'

"They pressed round her. The Prussian asked:

"'How did it take fire?'

"She answered:

"'I set it on fire!'

"They did not believe her. They thought that the disaster had suddenly made her crazy. Then, as all surrounded and listened to her, she told the story from one end to the other, from the arrival of the letter to the last cry of the men burnt up with the house. She did not forget a single detail of what she had felt or what she had done.

"When she had finished, she took from her pocket two papers, and, in order to distinguish them by the dying gleams of the fire, she again adjusted her spectacles, and then said, pointing to one of them:

"'That is the death of Victor.'

"Pointing to the other, she added, at the same time designating the red ruins with an inclination of her head.

"'These are their names, that their relatives may be informed.'

"She quietly handed the white sheet of paper to the officer, who took her by the shoulders, and she continued:

"'You will write them how it happened, and you will say to the parents that I did it, Victoire Simon, the savage. Don't forget.'

"The officer shouted some orders in German. They seized her and hurled her against the still hot wall of her dwelling. Then twelve men arranged themselves in front of her at a distance of twenty yards. She did not shrink. She had understood; she waited.

"An order rang out, followed immediately by a long report. The old woman did not fall. She sank, as if her legs had been mowed from under her. The Prussian officer approached. In her clenched hand she still held her letter."

My friend Serval added:

"By way of reprisal the Germans destroyed my neighbouring cottage."

As for me, I thought of the mothers of these four kind-hearted fellows burnt in this house, and of the atrocious heroism of this other mother shot against the wall.

L. B. KNIGHT.

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The - Final - War.

BY LOUIS TRACY.

CHAPTER XLVI. (*continued*).

NEITHER guns nor reinforcements were needed, for the lava tide of men flowed back towards the fortifications, and pursuit only ended when an outlying fort took advantage of the yet clear light of a summer's day to send some shells into Sir Drury Lowe's division.

Horror-stricken, nerveless, voiceless, the Café Brigade, as they were cruelly termed by a French general, literally crawled into safety, and in broken fragments reached Paris by sunrise the following morning.

But they had left 12,000 of their number on the green slopes of the Seine Valley. M. Hanotaux mourned contentedly when he heard the news, and M. Rochefort wondered how his deputy colonel had comforted himself.

Harington was not missed until the ambulance had long been busy on the battlefield.

Fate controls coincidence at times, and fate ordained that the corps of nurses headed by Irene and Ethel should be on duty with the field hospital staff provided for that day's engagement.

Inured by this time to the dreadful testimonies of war's unutterable misery, these devoted ladies performed their trying duties with a thoroughness and care that won the praise of the surgeons, and evoked tremulous gratitude from the pallid lips of the sufferers they tended.

Suddenly there came an orderly riding in hot haste towards the Deputy Surgeon-General, who was engaged in probing for a bullet in the shoulder of a Rifle officer.

"Whatever your business, you must wait until the operation is over," she said.

"All right, miss," said the dragoon, saluting; "but I must find somebody to listen to me at once. The Commander-in-Chief wants immediate search to be made for an officer who is a-missing from his staff."

"What is the officer's name?" said Irene, whilst her heart beat painfully, and Ethel looked up from the package of lint she was unfolding.

"Major Harington, miss. Gawd's truth, lady, I didn't know he was a friend of yours!"

The man's ejaculation was natural enough. Irene became deathly pale, and Ethel dropped the parcel in her hands, whilst she gazed, wild-eyed and stupefied, at the messenger.

But Irene was not going to faint at this supreme moment of need.

Her voice was calm as she asked with an almost supernatural effort of her indomitable will: "Did his lordship give you any idea of Major Harington's whereabouts?"

"Yes, miss," answered the soldier, who was genuinely sorry for the manner in which he had blurted out his sad intelligence. "The Major accompanied Sir Drury Lowe in the cavalry charge along with the 17th Lancers, and it is feared he met with some mishap."

"We must search for him at once," went on Irene, in the same reliant tone. "Tell that party of bearers to come here to me, and see if you can get correct information as to the direction taken by the Lancers."

The dragoon remounted to perform this duty, and Ethel, who now clung helplessly to her friend, moaned through her fast-flowing tears: "Oh, Irene, I must come also."

"No, dearest," was the firm reply. "We cannot both desert our duties. This is my task, and mine only. Your work lies here. Bear up, my darling, or my heart will break too soon."

Ethel Harington felt, even in the midst of her grief, that Irene's was the more pitiable state, and she strove hard to comfort her with words of hope.

As the orderly approached with the ambulance bearers, he inquired from one of the men as to Irene's identity.

"That's Lady Vyne, and the other is Miss Harington," was the answer.

"Phew!" whistled the enlightened Tommy. "Hissweetheart and his sister, I suppose. Well, her ladyship's a rare plucked 'un, anyhow."

They found Teddy at last, laid beneath the body of a Frenchman whose skull had been fractured by a kick from the guardman's charger.

Irene, of course, was the first to see him, and she tenderly lifted his bloodstained head whilst the dragoon dragged the Frenchman's corpse aside. In an instant she knew that he still breathed, and then her long pent motion broke forth in a passionate cry of delight that startled the men standing near.

But she soon recovered from the thrill of joy that threatened to be more disastrous than the first shock of pain. Finding the wound, she deftly cut away the matted hair, and satisfied herself that there was no fracture. Harington was insensible from concussion, but the extent of the injury it was impossible to ascertain at the moment.

He was lifted into the litter, and the movement certainly seemed to restore animation, for his breathing quickened and grew stronger. Irene poured a small quantity of brandy into his mouth, and repeated it at slight intervals, meanwhile asking the orderly to ride off quickly and tell Miss Harington that her brother was alive and not much injured, only stunned.

At last Teddy opened his eyes and looked at Irene bending over him. A puzzled look came into his face, but a smile chased it away, and he murmured weakly: "I know. That's all right."

She kissed him as she whispered: "Yes, dearest, it is all right, but you must not speak yet."

Again he said: "Can't we talk here?"

"No," she replied. "Not here."

Irene did not know what his words meant, but two hours later, when the Deputy Surgeon-General announced to the girls, that after a whiskey and soda and a sound sleep, Harington would want his breakfast, Teddy feebly explained.

He was sure that he had waked up in Heaven, and that Irene, transformed into an angel, was taking care of him.

* * * * *

Next morning there was unusual commotion throughout the British host.

No new attack created excitement, no specially dramatic event elsewhere had thus deeply stirred the troops.

At an early hour it was rumoured and afterwards confirmed that Mr. Thompson, the inventor, had arrived at Havre and was even now on his way to the front. Sure enough, at two o'clock he was driven from the nearest station to the Commander-in-Chief's quarters.

He remained closeted with Lord Roberts and the principal

"What is the officer's name?" said Irene.

members of the staff for a considerable time. Then the whole party drove to the station, where it was seen that the train which brought Mr. Thompson also carried one hundred large and heavy cases. Indeed, several big waggons were filled with them, and the engine-driver informed the officiating station-master that there were "lots more of 'em" on the way at Havre.

One of these cases was opened, and disclosed tier upon tier of Lee-Metford rifles, each with a peculiar-looking attachment mounted on the barrel in the place otherwise occupied by the backsight.

All the officers present were very anxious to examine and test the contrivance, but Mr. Thompson, a very quiet and self-possessed man, in whom one would never recognise the eager enthusiast who sprang to the door of the Prince of Wales' carriage on that memorable day in Hyde Park, said, with a smile: "Gentlemen, you must believe my word for a few hours longer. To-night I will ask you to accept facts, not theories."

CHAPTER XLVII.

The German Emperor Pauses.

There were now 600,000 British soldiers under arms on German soil.

At Stralsund, Sir Evelyn's force had suffered severely from sickness and the fortunes of war, but reinforcements sent to him in equal proportions from England and America had added 200,000 to his army. He had in all no less than 350,000 men under his command, and still held, beyond the power of dislodgment, the defences of Stralsund. General von Bremen, although in possession of a much stronger force, could do nothing except remain in disastrous impotence before him.

The main German power was established at Wittenburg, that hoary city over which once flew so defiantly the flag of the Reformation. Here, too, the German Emperor had come, eager and restless, to take supreme control. His 500,000 soldiers felt the electric presence of the gallant ruler, although General Grudenau could not conceal his own uneasiness.

"I don't say," he grumbled to one of his staff-officers "that consistency is a virtue; but I *do* maintain that in war it is well to remain of the same opinion for at least half-an-hour."

The fact was that the brave general lived a life of torment and perplexity. He was never certain what new whims or extravagances his impetuous sovereign might not indulge in next. And yet the veteran in his heart loved this fiery Hotspur of the Fatherland, in whose reckless courage and vehement enthusiasm was inspiration enough to inflame a dozen armies. So he endured in silence, and did his work as calmly as he could.

Twenty miles to the west, upon the banks of the Elbe, winding its way towards the great capital of German commerce, lay the British. Under the Duke of Connaught were 250,000 men, of whom 150,000 were English, and the remainder American. Already there had come rumours to the enemy that large additions might still be expected, or were already on their way. The whole Saxon race was now arming itself, and a ceaseless multitude might soon commence to pour through the German Ocean into the northern provinces. And for once the fanatic pride of the empire shuddered beneath the ominous warning, and there came a pause in the wild fury of her new-born militarism.

For far below this fierce surface spirit, this savage appetite which the whirl of national struggle had inflicted upon the German people, there lay the real Teuton character—deep, silent, strong. The true Germany was

homely, peaceful, and domestic, firm in her faith in her own great destinies, and yet spiritual and poetic. She was still the land of Schiller and of Goethe, still the home of arts and sciences, still the calm haunt of philosophy. Her true empire was that of mind, her true necessity that of peace. If of her ancient blood she still inherited fierce passions, vehement in their fury when they were roused, there nevertheless had grown over them the gentler ties of home, of romance, of family, of quiet industry.

The German . . . to drink his innocent beer in scented gardens.

The German loves to do his work, and then in the evening to drink his innocent beer in scented gardens to strains of pleasant music, and he knew that his English cousin was such as he. There was no quarrel between them. The Berliner thought of the Londoner, and this savage war began at last to appeal to him as little less than homicide.

It was friend against friend. Why should *he*, for reason that was not apparent, lay a dagger at his neighbour's throat?

The reports that came to the Emperor's ears were not all quite reassuring. His people remained firm to the cause which he had made their own, but he grew troubled as he began to realise that they had no longer a blind implicit faith in its wisdom or its justice.

He was pre-occupied by these thoughts one beautiful August morning when, in company with General Grudenau, he rode forward to inspect the lines and assure himself of their disposition. The very glory of the day served to heighten his melancholy, and to give a new and strange direction to its anxieties.

For the Emperor himself, though he had given no sign of it, had begun to doubt. He was a bold, hot-headed soldier, given to sudden and impetuous resolutions, inclined to rush headlong into mistakes he afterwards regretted, but at heart filled with the spiritual fervour of his race, anxious to be just, harbouring no petty animosities nor idle jealousies. He loved his country as deeply as her lowliest son, and his devotion was too passionate not to be guilty of magnificent blunders.

By what had he been induced to take up arms against the English people? It was not vain glory or mere lust of personal aggrandisement.

"Germany must make her way to new continents and found new provinces," he had declared to his English mother when she had reproached him with tears. "It is stern necessity, and I cannot hold it back. Shall I be coward enough to shrink from my misson? No! I must be worthy of the sublime traditions of my family. The founder of our race made Prussia great. My grandfather gave Germany her nationality and her pre-eminence. For me the third and noblest task may yet remain—to give to the Fatherland its hope, a new dominion, another empire. I am thrilled at the thought that I too may add a chapter to our glorious history!"

"And if it be inglorious?" questioned the Dowager-Empress.

"Forgive me, mother!" exclaimed the wayward son. "I do not wish to hurt you. You are English too. But kings can have no kinship. They stand isolated from all the ties of blood. My country and her destinies are to me father and mother. I cannot refuse my duty to them."

This reasoning had intoxicated him. He was as a "prophet new inspired"—the dark and horrid prospect of war was glorified in the dazzling sunlight of a splendid purpose.

But now he doubted much, and his mission seemed less clear. As day by day he saw his brave soldiers fall in battle, as he made his visits to the hospitals and saw their sufferings, as he felt the shock beneath which the German artisan and villager were staggering, when he heard of suffering and privation from every part of his dominions, when, before all, he found the war dragging on its pitiless length, with no great meed of glory to himself, rather with his purpose obscured, and perhaps blotted out by the grim and terrible present, his heart sank within him and cruel perplexities tormented him.

A sharp and sudden conflict and then immediate peace—that had been his theory. For a great right to "do a little wrong." But he was not prepared for such heroic answer to his rude challenge. Here was his own country invaded, the British arms everywhere victorious, Paris threatened, Russia helpless and himself struggling with frantic effort to throw off this tireless foe, which daily increased in energy and cunning, and daily became more strong from an infinite empire without. His purpose was already lost, doomed, hopeless. Was he to wait and let the wretched tragedy play on to a disastrous close? He shuddered as he thought of the frightful blow that even victory would deal at his country and his people.

These thoughts surged through his mind as he rode along on that fateful morning in August. Grudenau, noticing his gloomy silence, did not venture to put in a word. At last they got to an eminence whence they saw the white lines of the advance division of his great army, gleaming in the sun, and could note the restless movements of the soldiers, as, like little dots of colour, they flitted about the green plain.

The Emperor gazed for a long time upon the scene and then, turning upon his companion, asked abruptly:

"General, tell me, shall we beat these English?"

Grudenau started at this singular question, then, recovering himself, said:

"Your Majesty, the national greatness of our race and the splendid destinies of the German people leave no doubt that —"

"Stop, sir!" said the Emperor harshly. "I asked you, not as a courtier, but as a soldier."

"Your question is not an easy one, your Majesty," replied the discomfited officer.

"I desire your opinion, General," reiterated the Emperor in determined tones. "And I insist that you shall speak with the utmost sincerity, no matter how unpleasant it may be."

An officer was awaiting him with dispatches.

"I will obey you, sire," was Grudenau's reply. "Germany has not exhausted her armies' strength. She can pour army after army into the field. But ——" here he paused.

"But so can England, I suppose you mean?" exclaimed the Kaiser.

"That is so, your Majesty. England and America can between them, especially now that France is so hemmed in, flood our shores. Great Britain controls and can continue to control the sea. Her supplies are inexhaustible. The fighting must always take place upon our soil, and so far I do not quite see how the situation is to be relieved."

"England will defeat us, you would infer?" asked the Emperor.

"I did not say that," replied the General.

"What then?"

"Merely that we cannot defeat her."

"It is not a very exhilarating view to take, General," was the Kaiser's comment. "But I thank you. Let us return."

On the way back the Kaiser thought much of his General's words, and he felt the bitterness of their cruel but inexorable logic. Germany might fight on and on, but to what end? At the best it simply meant endless struggles, endless loss, endless misery. And for a policy that was now dead, for ever dead! His generous heart was torn at the thought of all that his beloved land must endure, and endure in silence, through the dark days yet to come.

And then a dull rage filled him as he considered the collapse of his golden dream, that castle in Spain which he had built of hopes so airy. He had thought to do as his fathers had done, to compass a mighty deed that might raise his own name to theirs. But how pitiful it seemed now!

Frederick had spent his days on the battlefield, unweariedly wresting his country's very existence from the rapacious grasp of his enemies. The great Kaiser Wilhelm had united its disordered provinces into one great dominion. He had set out to do battle with the oppressors of Germany, to vanquish an insolent foe, to overturn a neighbour whose very energy was a menace to the integrity of the Teuton empire. And what was it he himself had sought to do? He was fighting with the country nearest his own in kin, with whom he was allied by blood. He had accepted the unholy alliance of a sworn foe. He was struggling with a people with whom he had no quarrel, and whose wise statesmanship had supported and sustained the German cause. He had forgotten ties of friendship and claims of mutual interest. Could any act be less blest, less glorious, less heroic? And this he had done against the settled theory of his country's policy: he had dismissed the founder of the German empire, shunned his warnings, and this was the first fruits of his self-will!

A resolve he had long been pondering quickened in his mind as he galloped along. William was headstrong, but he had one redeeming virtue. He could own a mistake as easily as commit one; and he could make a reparation as splendid as a sin.

When he reached head-quarters an officer was awaiting him with dispatches.

"Stay with me a moment," he said to Grudenau. "I may need you."

Then he opened his dispatches. His brow clouded as he read.

"General von Bremen has certain intelligence that there are considerable reinforcements expected at Stralsund," he observed quietly to Grudenau. "They will enable the English to strike out and make a general advance. More, it is believed that a junction of the two corps will be attempted, and that, on the east at any rate, it will be impossible for us to effectively oppose it—serious news."

Count von Hohenlohe was seen proceeding on ho seback to the Emperor's quarters.

"What does your Majesty propose?" asked the General.

"I have decided," replied the Emperor, a trifle palo, but in firm accents. "I have decided to send for the Chancellor in order to discuss the advisability of treating for peace."

The Emperor had come to a singular resolution, one that could only emanate from a mind constituted as his was. It was one that would save his country from many indignities and possible catastrophes. To take the step he meditated needed a man of high-souled courage; and Wilhelm did not shrink from the burden of the responsibility. But first he desired the counsel of his Chancellor.

The camp was on fire with the news. Excitement found a vent in much loud guttural discussion, and many a labyrinthine sentence clamped with compound words was needed to express with ponderous adequacy the general emotion.

The feeling reached an extreme pitch of tension on the following morning when, scorning the ease and luxury of a carriage provided for him, Count von Hohenlohe was seen proceeding on horseback through the town of Wittenburg to the Emperor's quarters.

A sealed private letter from the Emperor William of Germany to Her Majesty the Queen of England.

The Emperor received the statesman at the door of his apartments and greeted him warmly; then, leading him within, proceeded to engage him in long and private conference.

The Count listened respectfully to the views that his eager master poured forth into his ears, and before replying, examined him narrowly on the condition and disposition of his armies. In particular he read closely and repeatedly the advices received with regard to the British movements and numbers.

"Germany, sire," said the Chancellor quietly, "has made a mistake; we must make use of the quickest remedy for the evil that has come upon us."

"Count," replied the Kaiser, "I am honest enough to own myself deceived. I have perpetrated a blunder which I repent with bitterness and self-reproach. I wish to repair my error. Let this fatal blunder not run out its terrible course. As I have explained, we can withdraw with something at least of honour from this war, if we act at once. The issue with us is still uncertain. England will gladly accept, on terms that must, I fear, be favourable to her, an armistice. Later on, we may be compelled to plead for what we can now treat on equal terms. Do you agree?"

The Chancellor looked steadily at his royal master.

"Your resolution, sire," he replied slowly, "is creditable to your heart and your judgment alike. Continuance of hostilities is disastrous to Germany, to her trade, to her commerce, to her happiness, and the lives of her citizens. It may prove fatal. I earnestly agree with your Majesty, and trust you will not delay your wise intentions. But the fault is ours as well as yours."

"I thank you, Count," exclaimed the Kaiser warmly, rising to his feet. "I now want your assistance and advice in drawing up the letter I propose to send."

"The letter?" asked the Chancellor in surprise.

"Yes. I cannot treat with the General of an hostile army. I must still regard my own position where I honestly can. It would be an admission of weakness, a tacit confession of defeat. The Duke of Connaught has no powers to make terms with me. I shall send a letter to London, to the Queen. She is my grandmother, and will gladly lay my proposals before the Council of War."

The Count bowed but made no reply. He followed the Emperor into an inner room.

That afternoon two German officers, approaching the English lines, demanded audience of the Duke of Connaught. On seeing him they asked the favour of transmission, unopened, of a sealed private letter from the Emperor William of Germany to Her Majesty the Queen of England. And that night the letter, intrusted to two English couriers, left on its journey to English shores.

(To be continued.)

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ROBBING A CHILD.

JOHN DRISCOLL had not tasted food for forty-eight hours. He was absolutely penniless. As he walked up Oxford Street, clad in a fashionable suit of clothes, with a shiny silk hat on his head, few people could suspect that he was suffering for want of food.

He pursued his course up the great thoroughfare and finally reached Hyde Park.

Weak and faint, but still maintaining an indifferent mien, he entered the park.

He sat down at intervals and rested his weak limbs, but the act of sitting seemed to remind him more of his hunger.

It is a hard trial for a young, vigorous, and healthy man to go for any great length of time without food, and especially so in a rich, populous city. If he had been dressed in rags, he would have begged, but it was utterly impossible for him to do that with his present appearance.

After a time he found himself in a secluded part of the park. He seated himself on a bench. He reviled his fate—everything. "Oh!" he thought, "how I would like a morsel of food!"

He felt like committing a robbery, or any crime, or doing anything that would bring him food.

A light footstep near him aroused him from his reverie. There, before him, stood a fat, chubby, rosy-cheeked little child, gazing at him with wide, staring eyes. In his plump little hands he held a large home-made pie.

Driscoll started up. The sight of that pie was most tantalising in its effect upon him. How he would like to eat it!

There was no one in the immediate vicinity, no one to observe him. The child was fat and well-fed, and he (Driscoll) was starving.

He arose and approached the child.

"My little man," said he, smiling as graciously as it was possible for him to do, "come here."

"What have you there, my dear?" said Driscoll. "Pie?"

"Eth, thir," lisped the little one.

"Let me see it, baby," he said, but the little one shook his head and held the pie behind his back.

"Come," said Driscoll, "won't baby let me see its pie?"

The child gravely gave a negative shake of the head.

"Please let uncle see it," said Driscoll coaxingly, and at the same time making an effort to take it.

"No, no; me 'ant's it," said the baby.

"Let me have it," said Driscoll impatiently.

The little one made a movement as though to run away.

Tired of importuning the baby and fearful lest its mother or nurse should appear and spoil his opportunity, he suddenly bent his face close to that of the child. Assuming the most diabolical and forbidding expression it was possible for him to do, he hissed out: "Give me that pie; give me that pie quick, or I'll murder and eat you, quick!"

The child gave a terrified scream, let the pie drop at Driscoll's feet and scampered down a side path as rapidly as his short little legs could travel. Driscoll quickly picked the pie up, held it in one hand, which he placed within the breast of his coat, and sauntered nonchalantly away.

He wanted to find some quiet spot where unmolested, he could eat his stolen pie, but everywhere he went he found one or more persons. At length he reached an out-of-the-way corner, and sitting himself on the grass, drew forth his precious pie.

The ridiculousness of the thing now struck him, and he burst into a hearty peal of laughter. He held the pie at arm's length and looked at it. He was just about to place it to his mouth; but, alas and alack, "there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip!" A large Newfoundland dog at this juncture jumped from a clump of bushes, snatched the pie from his hands and bounded swiftly away.

Poor Driscoll!

All the merriment fled from his heart at once. His pie was gone beyond recovery.

"Fate is against me," he muttered sadly as he arose to his feet and walked away.

"Have I got to starve to death surrounded by plenty? It is too hard. Well, I will hold up as long as I have strength."

When he turned out of the park, it was well on in the afternoon. He wandered aimlessly along the streets, scarcely knowing in which direction he was going.

As he passed a certain house he heard a childish voice exclaim:

"Papa, papa, there is the man that took my pie!"

Turning, he beheld the identical little child whose pie he had taken, clinging to the hand of a gentleman, evidently just returning from business.

The gentleman's face seemed familiar, and no sooner had he scanned Driscoll's countenance than he cried out:

"John Driscoll, how are you?"

And at the same time he held out his hand for the other to take. This Driscoll did, and as remembrances came to his brain he recollected an old college chum and a warm friend. "Charley Vaughan," he cried, "I am delighted to see you."

It was a particularly happy evening for Driscoll. After some conversation Vaughan invited him in, and ere long Driscoll related the whole story of the pie over a glass of wine. Vaughan was immensely amused.

He insisted upon Driscoll remaining with him until certain remittances arrived, and lent him a sum of money to tide him over his present difficulties.

As Driscoll remarked, however, it was a fortunate and opportune theft for him to rob Vaughan's child of the pie, for it was the sound of the familiar voice of the child that had caused him to turn involuntarily, which act had led to his recognition.

E. LINDSAY.

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Mr. CANHAM, 87 Alexandra Road, Norwich: "Tablets cured my wife of extreme stoutness; it has never returned."
LADY CONSTANCE CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with the Tablets."
Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send your excellent Tablets directly."
COUNTESS G. FURSTENBERG, Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."
Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient lost more than a stone."
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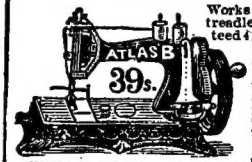

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NOTES OF INTEREST.

RESULT of Jumble Story and Puzzle Picture competitions will appear next week.

G. N.—A boy born on French soil of parents, one of whom may be English, but born in France, is regarded as French, and is liable to conscription. He might, perchance, have to fight against his own brother, if England and France ever went to war, for if the brother was born in England, not even an Anglo-French father could make him French. I trust this explanation will clear up the difficulty for you.

T. N.—You are mistaken; the Cubans are very sober people. They have cafés, but drunkenness is very rare. One of their favourite drinks is composed of white sugar, water, and the white of an egg. If they were fond of alcoholic beverages they would not patronise the one just described to the extent they do.

L. J.—Your friend is right; the famous pear tree near Toulon was destroyed in a gale about two years ago. Its trunk was twelve feet in circumference, and the tree had an authenticated history of six centuries. The proprietor of the ground on which it stood corresponded with all the botanical societies in Europe in order to discover another that could compare with it in age and size, but he could hear of none.

G. M. writes: "Can you tell me the reason why grooms almost invariably make a hissing sound, as if they were blowing through their teeth, when grooming a horse or cleaning a carriage?"———Why, to keep the dust out of their mouths, of course. The groom is a particular man; the horse's coat is dusty after a day's work; the wheels of the carriage are caked with dry mud. Think what a lot of dirt he would swallow in a lifetime if he didn't take care to prevent its entering his mouth.

H. D. B.—The passage of a funeral procession down any road immediately makes that road a public thoroughfare for good and all.

PLAYER.—Yes, golf is certainly increasing in favour in this country, and in others, too. There are no fewer than twenty-two golf clubs in India, five in Egypt, four in Melbourne, eight in New Zealand, and fourteen in Canada. In 1888, the number of well-known clubs was 195, now there are something like 1,500.

B. W.—You are not quite right. Certainly sugar is made from beet-root, but not from the red variety you are acquainted with, but from the white only—that with the green leaves, sometimes called the Sicilian beet.

"WHY do people shrug their shoulders in cold weather?" writes T. P.———This is the relic of primæval days, when, according to Darwin, the human frame was blessed with a hairy epidermis. All animals with long hair or feathers erect their coats in cold weather, for the warmth of such a covering depends upon its thickness and the amount of air it contains, rather than its bulk.

C. L. G.—The engine of an express train consumes twelve gallons of water for each mile travelled.

R. S. T. writes: "Some time ago I read in one of your publications that it was possible to obtain a male nurse. Can you tell me where I should apply for one?"———I should advise you to write to either of the associations at 69 Wigmore Street, London, W, or 10 Thayer Street, Manchester Square, W.

P. D. N. wants to know the distinction (if any) between a road and a street.———Strictly speaking, a main thoroughfare should be called a road, and a side turning, whatever the size, a street.

ETHEL G. writes to ask at what age does a woman become an old maid.———So far as I know, there is no recognised boundary line in this country between girlhood and old maidenhood. In France, however, an unmarried woman is an old maid at thirty. She is still a young maid at twenty-nine years, eleven months, and twenty-nine days, but twenty-four hours later she has reached old maidenhood.

C.—The Cabinet was at one time merely a Committee of the Privy Council, and is, according to a legal authority, "unknown to law." But the Privy Council has ceased to meet for purposes of deliberation, and is now really a ceremonial body. In proof of the complete dissociation of the two bodies at the present time, it is pointed out that, whereas the Privy Council cannot meet except under the presidency of the Sovereign, the monarch cannot constitutionally preside at the meetings of the Cabinet.

W. M.—The best gloves in the world are made in Belgium.

MISS G. H. was recently informed that if she really desired to gain any benefit from the wearing of fur on her garments the fur should be on the inside instead of out. She does not care much about this idea, as fur worn in this manner would not be nearly so becoming as it is when worn on the outside, and wishes to know whether this notion is a true one.———You're all right. Actual experiments have been made and have proved that furs conserve far greater heat on the body when the fur is exposed to the air than when the reverse is the case.

ROB.—The largest bog in Ireland is the bog of Allen, stretching east of the Shannon, which covers something like 200,000 acres. Altogether, about one-sixth of the area of the country is bog.

E. W.—So far as the most recent statistics go, the known proportion of mankind who are blind is about one in 1,500, which would give a total of 1,000,000 blind in the world.

T.—There are about twenty metals more precious than gold, but, naturally, we hear very little about them. Iridium, one of the best known of these precious metals, was worth £65 an ounce at one time, but the value decreases as the metal becomes more plentiful. About seven years ago the value of platinum increased to £4 10s. per ounce, and a jeweller offered me a pair of solid platinum sleeve-links at a price that was about a third of the then value of the metal. He did not believe me when I mentioned the price of platinum. Soon after the price fell, and a year later it was selling for less than half. Since then it has been under thirty shillings; but the price fluctuates.

W. E.—The robes of the Speaker of the House of Commons are identical with the official costume of the Master of the Rolls. In former times the two offices were often united.

P.—The water of the River Tinto, in Spain, has the property of hardening and gradually petrifying the things that fall into it. If a stone is thrown into the river and alights upon another stone at the bottom the two gradually become one. Fish cannot live in the water.

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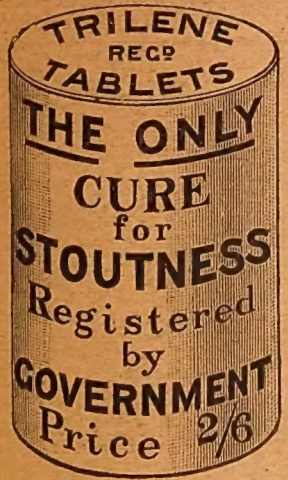

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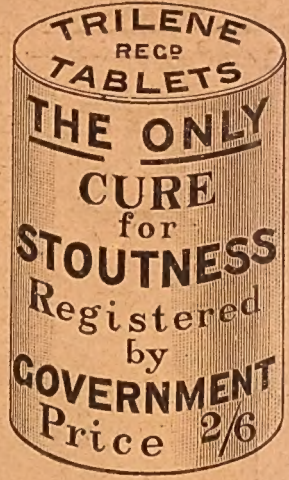

SAMPLES OF TESTIMONIALS.

"87 Alexandra Road, Norwich, October 19th, 1896.

"Gentlemen,—In reference to Trilene Tablets, I may say that my wife found the greatest possible benefit from the use of them; their action was rapid, and exceeded our utmost expectations, as they were also most beneficial to the respiratory organs. My wife was many years growing so stout, but although the disease was, I consider chronic, the Tablets soon reduced the same completely. You have our united thanks, and if I can do anything to promote your interests I will freely use my utmost endeavours to do so.

"Yours faithfully, J. R. CANHAM."

MRS. DARNLEY SMITH, Landscove Vicarage, Ashburton, writes: "Trilene Tablets have reduced my weight very much. I am so much lighter in every way, and better in health."

COUNTESS SECKENDORFF, of Berlin, writes: "The Tablets greatly benefited me personally, and I am recommending them to friends."

MISS CHATTERTON, 7 Salisbury Villas, Banstead, Surrey, says: "I weighed 12st. 8lb., but am now 11st. and getting much better."

Nurse CROUCHER, at Mrs. Bennett's, 14 Buckleigh Road, Streatham, says: "I lost 9lb. from the box I took."

"77 Hindhill Street, Heywood, February 5th, 1898.

"Gentlemen,—I have not quite finished the box of Tablets and am 2lb. lighter. The change is great, and several friends are beginning the treatment, which not only reduces fat but strengthens rheumatic joints—such has been the case with me. "Yours sincerely, M. A. HEYWOOD."

Mrs. D. BURTON, of Silvercleigh, Tunbridge, writes: "I am very pleased with difference in size, my friends all telling me how much thinner I am getting."

Miss NORTHLEDGE, The Laurels, Rischolme Road, Lincoln, says: "The Tablets reduced me 1st., so that I am cured."

West Cornforth, Ferryhill.

Mr. WM. USHER says: "A sister of mine, who was 17st., was greatly reduced by your Tablets to 15st."

Extract from *The Lady*, September 3rd, 1896: "Many stout persons have suffered untold agonies in unavailing efforts to reduce their bulk, either by means of severe dieting, or by taking more or less deleterious drugs; but all these pains would have been saved if they had only invested in a box of the wonderful Trilene Tablets which are quite harmless, containing neither mercury, arsenic, nor any other mineral poison, and which are an unfailing cure for obesity."

FATHER T. M. BYRNE, of Holy Cross Abbey, Sligo, writes: "When I began your Tablets I was 12st. 5lb.; I now scale at 10st. 11lb.—my case, too, is hereditary."

MRS. T. BOSTON, Cambridge Villas, Clifford Street, South Wigston, says: "I congratulate you on your wonderful Tablets. My weight at first starting them was 11st. 7lb., and I now weigh 9st. 11lb."

Mr. MCLEOD, 44, Calside, Paisley, writes: "I have been cured. If you want to know my weight now, it is 10st.; reduced 1st. 8lb., and I am quite content."

A. M. PRATT, of Ongar House, Ongar, says: "My weight is so much reduced it is unnecessary to take more. The reduction of weight was from 12st. 6lb. to 10st. 4lb."

Mrs. WHITEHOUSE, of Poplar Avenue, Edgbaston, writes: "My husband is in splendid health, and has lost 15lb. in weight since taking the Tablets; I am sure I thank you on his account."

MRS. H. COX, 28 Watnall Road, Hucknall Torkard, writes: "The box of Tablets has reduced my weight 1½ stones."

MR. WALKER, 236 London Road, Hazelgrove, Stockport, says: "I have used one box and am 14lb. lighter. Send another soon as possible."

Col.-Sergt. WHITTLE, of East Lancashire Regt., Burnley, Lancs, says: "A man in our regiment in 1891 lost several stone from taking your Tablets."

Mr. BUTLER, Surgeon, M.R.C.V.S., of Hampton Manor, Evesham, says: "My patient has lost 1st. in weight whilst taking your Tablets."

Miss B. MCKENZIE, of Greenhall, High Blantyre, N.B., says: "Completely cured, being reduced 2st."

Mrs. W. A. RADFORD, of High Street, New Brinsley, Eastwood, writes: "Before taking Tablets I was 46 inches round waist, now I am 32 inches. I hope soon to be 23. I could hardly move or get up, now I get about easily. Please use this as you wish."

Countess G. FURSTENBERG, of Stammheim, Germany, writes: "They act speedily and well."

The Princess LIECHTENSTEIN writes from Landsberg, Austria: "Pray send me your excellent Tablets."

Mrs. WEAVER, of Greenpits Villa, Ross, Hereford, writes: "I am reduced from 13st. 8lb. to 11st. You may use this if you like."

MRS. CROSSLEY, of Rose Hill, Torver, nr. Coniston, says: "There is a very decided diminution of fat. I am delighted, and cannot speak too highly in praise of Tablets. My heart is better, and I can breathe so much easier. You may refer to me as often as you like."

Lady C. CONRAD writes from Wiesbaden: "I am very pleased with your Tablets."

Mrs. TAYLOR-ROBINSON, of Tweed Green House, Whalley Range, Manchester, says: "I feel so much lighter and better since taking your Tablets, and am so much thinner that I hardly recognise myself."

Miss A. LONG, of 9 South Parade, Waterford, writes: "Your Tablets have reduced me 14lb."

Miss A. DAWSON, 62 Orchard Street, Weston-super-Mare, says: "Glad to say the Tablets have sufficiently reduced me. I shall always recommend them."

THE TRILENE ASSOCIATION, 66 FINSBURY PAVEMENT, LONDON.

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CONTAINS NO ACID

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Dab a small quantity on a penny and leave it overnight. If it sets up acid the surface will become green with that poisonous compound known as verdigris "MATCHLESS" METAL POLISH will not turn any metal green.

"WARNING TO LADIES."
Beware of Polishes that set up injurious acids when brought in contact with the metal. They impregnate your cloths with verdigris and spoil your hands.

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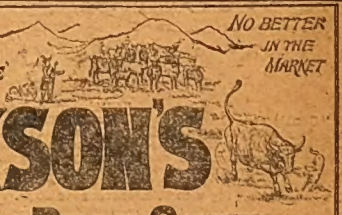

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